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Letters to a friend on the
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LETTERS TO A FRIEND
ON THE
DOCTRINES OF THE TRINITY
AND
THE ATONEMENT.

LETTERS TO A FRIEND,
ON THE
DOCTRINES OF THE TRINITY
AND
THE ATONEMENT:

EXPLANATORY OF THE AUTHOR'S REASONS FOR DECLINING TO JOIN
IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND :

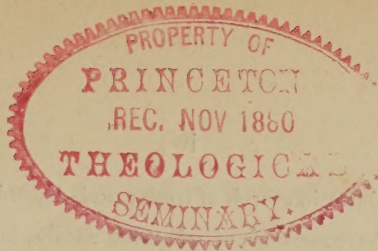
WHEREIN AN ATTEMPT IS MADE, BY AN EXAMINATION OF THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL,
TO THROW LIGHT ON THE SACERDOTAL CHARACTER OF OUR LORD,
AS TYPIFIED IN THE RITES AND CEREMONIES OF
THE ANCIENT COVENANT.

BY GEORGE ✓ WALKER.

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PREFACE.

DURING the Author's residence in a retired village in France, it was his good fortune to make the acquaintance of three English ladies, of highly liberal and cultivated minds, but strictly orthodox in all their religious opinions. In reply to an invitation to join them in the morning service of the Church of England, he urged his objections to its doctrines, particularly those of the Trinity and the Incarnation. He was then referred to the various texts on which these dogmas mainly depend, requesting his own explanation of them, as well as the grounds in general of his dissent. It was with no little distrust of his competency to the task, that he entered upon an examination of these passages; for he confesses, that his opinions upon these subjects were more the result of early association, and, he may say, of a kind of hereditary prejudice, than of any serious and candid inquiry. Under the circumstances, also, in which he was placed, deprived of every resource, he had no other means of information than what could be derived from a diligent study of the Scriptures, as the only book to which he could have access. The result of this, he hopes, impartial investigation, is contained in the following Letters. Whether there be any *novelty* in his observations, his little knowledge of controversial divinity will not enable him to say; but he can assure the reader, that at least they have the merit of *originality*, for he is not aware that he has borrowed even the shadow of an argument from either men or books. With a free and unbiassed mind, he took

up the sacred volume in search of truth ; and, discarding all sectarian prejudices, all prepossessions of whatever nature, he has drawn his conclusions, founded, as he conscientiously believes, on its genuine and unsophisticated doctrines. In this point of view, they may perhaps claim a degree of attention, to which, on other grounds, they may not be entitled.

He has not entered upon this discussion as a scholar or a critic ; he makes no pretension to philological learning, to comment upon the authenticity or true reading of doubtful and disputed passages. As an ordinary reader, he has taken up the common version, having assumed to himself, what he thinks he was fully authorized to do, the right of interpreting its language with the same freedom as that of any other book. In the exercise of this right, with, he trusts, a candid and truth-seeking spirit, he confesses, though as the version of Orthodoxy it may fairly be presumed to be not unfavorable to its own doctrines, that he has in vain sought therein for any confirmation of them ; on the contrary, it does appear to him that their refutation is written in every page, even in those very passages which are specially adduced in their support, where he meets with no difficulties of which they themselves do not otherwise furnish an easy and satisfactory solution. In his opinion, the moral precepts on which all agree are not announced in clearer and more positive terms, than those doctrinal points on which so many differ ; particularly that great fundamental one, on which all turns, the unity of the Deity. No one, with an unprejudiced mind, can continue to read, without every where finding the confirmation of this important truth ; and there is nothing that ought to excite more just surprise, than the learning and ingenuity which have been employed to pervert the meaning of the plainest language, and to controvert a truth of all

others the most repeatedly and distinctly affirmed. The efforts of biblical scholars to restore the text to its original purity; to correct the errors, wilful or accidental, the consequence of frequent transcripts; to explain incidental allusions, and references to dates and facts, and whatever tends to place on a firmer basis the truth of our religion, have been most usefully and laudably employed. But these are points which contribute but in a remote degree to the contrariety of men's opinions. It is founded upon the text, such as we have it, and such as it is on all hands admitted; and as this can only be construed according to the recognized meaning of words, and the ordinary rules of language and criticism, it is competent to any one of fair understanding, to compare and judge, and form his own opinions: nay, it is probable that such a one, with a mind free from prepossessions, may have a clearer discernment and a more lively sense of the truth and simplicity of its doctrines, than they who, under the influence of scholastic prejudices and vanities, are more like men who strain their eyes at distant objects, to discover that which lies immediately in their path before them.

It cannot be that the truths of Christianity, which were meant for all, are of a nature recondite, and hard if not impossible to understand. If, instead of enlightening the world by a plain and intelligible doctrine, Christ came to preach unintelligible mysteries; if, instead of shewing to man the direct and straight road to salvation, he has left him as before to grope in the dark, or involved him in a labyrinth from which there is no escape, then it might indeed be asked, for what end did he come into the world? But so far from preaching a mysterious doctrine, nothing can be more simple than the whole scheme of Christianity, or developed in simpler language. From God's love of the world He sent Christ into it, to recal it to the

knowledge of Himself, and to the practice of virtue as a preparation for eternal happiness. This is the sum and substance of the whole. All beyond is mere human speculation, with which we have little or nothing to do, but which the pride of man would engraft upon it as its genuine doctrine. Within these boundaries all are agreed. Here is no difference of opinion; but when, with a spirit at variance with its character and simplicity, the Scriptures are searched to find therein dark and hidden mysteries, and to this end the words are forced into a sense the very reverse of what they bear, it is then that men's opinions become divergent; that a multitude of conflicting doctrines are broached, inconsistent the one with the other, and each with itself; so much so, that on the very nature of the dogmas on which they profess to agree, scarcely two opinions coincide; a proof that all this is not essential, that all this is not Christianity.

If the most rational and intelligible doctrines, announced in the clearest and most indisputable terms, are not only to be set aside, but to be understood in a sense opposed to the words, then language is no longer adequate to the conveyance of truth. If the most positive and solemn injunctions of Scripture are to be superseded by obscure inferences from an obscure phraseology,—if, indeed, that phraseology can be called obscure, which is only made so by misconstruction,—then there is nothing of which we can be assured. But were it true that they were passages of a dubious and ambiguous character, and apparently difficult to reconcile with other parts of Scripture, are we at liberty to give them a sense inconsistent with its declared doctrines elsewhere? Are they to give the tone and character to the whole? Are all its truths and laws and doctrines and precepts, to be qualified by mere arbitrary inferences from a few insulated passages? As well might the philosopher, from the few

specks which he discovers in the sun's surface, characterize the whole as dark and obscure, insensible all the while to its splendour, its warmth, and its vivifying influence; for this is what they do who search the Scriptures, that great moral source of light and life, intent only to discover therein dark and hidden meanings, whilst they shut their eyes to the great primary truths which shine forth with such resplendent lustre in every page. And what is the result, vain man, of all your mysterious discoveries? Why, that you have done that which the ignorant and unenlightened of every age have done; you have exchanged an heavenly for an earthly, a spiritual for a carnal, a merciful for a vengeful God. You have fashioned Him after your own likeness, an anthropomorphic Deity, to whom you have attributed your own passions and frailties. Unable to feel or to comprehend the pure, holy and sublime truths of revelation, you have abased them to the level of your own gross conceptions. And these vulgar imaginings you would force upon the consciences of others, as if you spoke with the voice of inspiration. Of the incomprehensible God, you declare the nature and generation with as much dogmatic assurance, as if you had been admitted into the third heaven, and had opened the volume of its hidden mysteries. And thus it ever will be, when you approach the Scriptures with a worldly spirit. As easy for the light of heaven to visit the eyes of the blind, or the harmony of sounds the sealed ears of the deaf, as that its pure and divine truths should shine in upon a mind darkened by prejudice, and passion, and pride, and self interest, and the vanities of human learning. If you love the truth, prepare yourselves for its reception; seek instruction with a humble mind; look into the Scriptures, not for what you wish to find, but for what you do find. Above all, open your hearts to the influence of its heavenly spirit; receive it as an

emanation altogether of love and mercy, and you will then perceive that what is the character of the whole, is and must be that of every part, and that no construction which is at variance with this character can be the true one ; for truth cannot be opposed to itself, nor one part of the Scriptures to another. If they were thus searched with a spirit in unison with them, they would always be found the best interpreters of themselves, the clearest and most satisfactory expounders of all those difficulties which have been thrown upon them by that load of creeds and commentaries, of dogmas and doctrines, under which all their original truth and simplicity have been well nigh lost sight of.

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LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

LETTER I.

My dear Friends,

When I declined your kind invitation to accompany you in the Morning Service of the Church of England, on the ground of my dissent from its doctrines, I promised, at your request, to give you my reasons for this dissent. I am afraid that I have undertaken a task which I am but ill qualified to execute. It is long since my attention has been turned to this subject, and never perhaps so much as its importance deserved. I am but very imperfectly acquainted with the tenets of different sects, or the grounds on which they are defended; for I have scarcely ever read a page of controversial divinity, and have rarely made it a subject of conversation: and in this retired situation, where I find myself cut off from every source of information, where the Bible is the only book to which I can have recourse, I can only pretend to furnish you with those reasons which formerly determined my judgment, with such additional ones as may present themselves during this enquiry. Whether there be any novelty in them, I know not; they are entirely the result of my own reflections; and however satisfactory they have been to my mind, I doubt that they may be equally so to yours: for I know through what a different medium we regard this subject, and in what a different light the same arguments

will present themselves to your view and to mine. It is nevertheless indispensable to the due understanding of this question, that we come to the consideration of it with unbiassed minds ; whatever previous opinions we may have formed, we must suspend ; all prejudices, of whatever nature, we must subdue : if we are not able to do this, (and it is no easy thing to do,) we can never arrive at any conclusion that will be either profitable or satisfactory. Of all prejudices, those of religion are the most inveterate ; for independently of the usual tenacity of the mind to its opinions, there is superadded a fearful apprehension of error, which prevents the usual operation of the understanding. Nevertheless, there is but one conduct, on all occasions, that is worthy of a rational being : to be ever actuated by a pure unmixed love of truth ; at all times, and under all circumstances, to let this have the ascendancy in our minds. If we allow any motive of fear, pride, interest or conveniency to stifle this sentiment in our heart, never let us expect that the light of truth will break in upon us ; from that moment we become devoted to error, the voluntary children of darkness. The struggle I am aware is always severe, between the renunciation of opinions long entertained, and our better judgment ; and to act a decided part under such circumstances, requires a force of mind that is not given to every one. The whole history of the world proves how difficult it is to destroy the influence of pre-conceived opinions. Even in the present enlightened day, we see the most important truths obliged to yield to the force of established errors ; and in the ordinary occupations of life, that administer to man's daily utility and profit, such is the force of attachment to ancient habits, that they survive in spite of reason and constant experience. What then must be the strength of those opinions which have the earliest taken root in our minds ; which have been nurtured and matured by those to whom we are bound by the ties of duty, gratitude

and affection ; avowed by almost all with whom we come in contact ; countenanced by the government under which we live, and encouraged by all the allurements of worldly grandeur and emolument. When we consider this, the wonder is, not that such opinions are retained from generation to generation, but that their influence should ever be shaken, that the mind should ever emancipate itself from the shackles in which it is held. But happily for human nature, God has implanted in the heart that which is more powerful than all ; there is that still small voice of reason, which is always whispering to the mind of man ; that little ray of divinity, which may for awhile become obscured, but can never be wholly extinct, which ever and anon pierces through the clouds and darkness in which human passions and human interests envelope it, and conducts man slowly, but progressively, on the road to truth.

Let truth then be on this, as on every occasion, the sole object of our pursuit ; let us follow it with an undivided attachment, with an entire affection ; let there be no secret partialities, no lurking prepossessions, no fear of the result to which it may conduct us. We must consider that this is a subject of no ordinary curiosity, but one of the highest interest, inasmuch as it involves our duty towards God ; that if we allow, therefore, any earthly consideration to influence us in our endeavour to ascertain what that duty is, we are guilty of an offence towards Him. To seek the truth in sincerity of heart, and to the best of our abilities, will be required of us ; beyond this we are not answerable. All involuntary error will be pardoned. But let us not deceive ourselves ; it will not be sufficient to plead in justification of the faith that we profess, that we have received it from others ; whatever may be the merits of those whose opinions we adopt, whatever deference we owe to their talents and their virtues, yet nothing can release us from the indispensable obligation

of enquiring for ourselves. The most pernicious doctrines have at times been countenanced by the wisest and the best of men; an implicit submission therefore to the opinions of others, would be at once to consecrate error, and to lay an eternal bar against the future progress of truth and reason. Let us not urge, from a diffidence of our own powers, that we are unequal to the task of deciding for ourselves; for to whom then are we to refer, since we see men of equal capacity and research forming opposite conclusions on the same subject? To adopt therefore implicitly the sentiments of either, is to be right or wrong as hazard shall decide; and indeed if we do not make use of our own understandings, to what but chance are we indebted for our opinions? We profess them because they were the earliest inculcated upon our minds; and thus it happens that nine-tenths of the world continue without having any settled notions upon that which so nearly concerns them. Under whatever system of faith they may happen to be born, in that they live and die, without ever thinking it worth their while to examine the rectitude of their opinions. Such blind belief can never be dignified by the name of faith: it is a culpable indifference, an indolent acquiescence in the sentiments of others, which is unworthy of a rational being, and in a Christian, criminal. It is by the exercise of our own understanding that we shall be able to render to every one a reason for the faith that is in us. If the bulk of mankind, from the circumstances in which they are placed, are under the necessity of receiving their religious instruction from others, it is then still more incumbent on us, who have the leisure to search and the capacity to understand, to do all that lies in our power that we may not by our example tend to sanction error; that we may not contribute by our personal influence to lead astray those who may look up to us as their guide. For let us not imagine that the truths of Christianity are beyond our attain-

ment. No. It is the bad passions of man that have wrapped them up in obscurity ; the pride and vanity of his heart, his contentious spirit, his false zeal, his lust of worldly power and dominion, that have involved in doubts and mysteries the plain and simple doctrines of our religion. Can it be imagined that God has given to man, for the regulation of his faith, instructions which he cannot understand? That He has rendered obscure and doubtful that, to the belief of which, as you say, he has attached salvation? Then indeed would Christ have died in vain, and our faith be foolishness. But God has more wisely fitted the means to the end ; He has adapted His revelation to man's understanding, and we only involve ourselves in doubt and perplexities in proportion as we depart from it. When we have recourse to it, with an humble and contrite spirit, to seek for instruction, to subdue our understandings and all the vain imaginations of our hearts to the force of its divine truth, we shall find no difficulties which will not disappear before the simplicity of its doctrines, and the plain, evident and rational interpretation of the text. But if, wise in our own conceits, we search the Scriptures not for instruction, but to pervert the meaning to the support of favorite doctrines, of preconceived opinions, it is then that we make revelation mysterious and unintelligible, by mixing it up with our own speculations, by engrafting thereon our own follies and absurdities. Let us therefore, in the prosecution of this subject, keep our eyes on the sacred text, as our only guide. If the language present occasional difficulties, which is sometimes the case in the Epistles, especially of St. Paul, you will find that they will disappear by taking into consideration the direct object of the writer, the circumstances under which, and the persons to whom they were addressed. If the sense still be doubtful to you, you may be sure that your interpretation of it is wrong when it clashes with other

passages, where there is no ambiguity of language, and the meaning is clear and explicit.

LETTER II.

IN the 26th ch. of St. Matthew are these words: "And he said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and he fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." These words, by whomsoever they were delivered, are an avowal of human passions and frailties, grief, fear, apprehension of approaching pain and death. Now, what was the nature of that being by whom this prayer was uttered? You are instructed by the doctrine of your church, that it was God incarnate in the body of Christ, and that these words are applicable only to His human nature. In adopting this belief it must necessarily have been more or less the subject of your thoughts. Tell me then, what is the precise idea that you have attached to it? For no matter what it be to which your faith is required, whether a mystery that is beyond, or a truth that lies within, the compass of your understanding, it is alike necessary that you have some knowledge of what the nature of it is, before you can believe it. It is impossible to assent to any proposition of the meaning of which you are ignorant. To believe without knowing what it is that you believe, is in fact to have no belief at all. Let us therefore examine a little this doctrine of the incarnation, and see how far we can reconcile to our understanding the union of a divine and human, of a perfect and imperfect nature in the same substance. Let us therefore, in the first place, before we proceed to enquire into

its scripture foundation, treat it simply as a subject of reason, and let us bring to it the exercise of our understanding as freely as we should do on any other subject on which we were called upon to form an opinion.

Such a proposition may perhaps a little startle you, and I am afraid that you may not accede to it without some misgivings of conscience. You have been taught to regard this as a subject on which our reason cannot and ought not to be employed; that it is an incomprehensible mystery which we cannot fathom; and therefore a fit exercise of our faith, but not of our understanding; that however incompatible it may be with all our previous notions of the Deity; however improbable, nay impossible, such an union may appear, it is nevertheless implicitly to be received by you as an article of faith.

Before we proceed any farther it is essential that we come to an understanding upon this most important point; for if you consider it to be your duty to adhere to this belief in despite of all argument and proof, if in the very outset we are to abandon reason as useless, it is to no purpose that we continue this enquiry. You wish to submit your opinions on this subject to the test of examination, but how you are to do this without the exercise of your understanding, I know not; nay, more than this is required from you, that you allow your judgment and your belief to be influenced by your understanding. Reason and faith are the two great and distinctive ornaments of a man and a Christian, but they have their proper boundaries which it is highly important to ascertain; for if either be allowed to usurp upon the other, it never fails to produce those evils which each in its proper sphere is calculated to avert. If error and infidelity be the consequence of a too great confidence in our own powers, it is no less true that faith, to the exclusion of reason, invariably leads to superstition and fanaticism, and has ever been, in

every age and part of the world, the great cause of the corruption of religion. When once we consent to abandon reason, there is no degree of degradation to which the human mind will not submit; there is no absurdity to which the understanding will not reconcile itself.

I have no wish to weaken the influence of faith upon your minds, nor do I call upon you, in the pride of human reason, to reject what you cannot comprehend. In this imperfect state, and with our limited knowledge, we are invited in almost all our relations with God and nature to the exercise of this virtue; and culpable and wretched indeed should we be, were we to abandon this the most ennobling and consolatory of all sentiments, the foundation of all our hopes, and the only basis on which virtue and religion rest. This faith, arising from a feeling of our dependence upon, and our confidence in, the divine goodness, is a sublime and intelligible faith, worthy of a man and a christian, founded on truth, reason, nature and providence, which teaches us resignation and humility under all the dispensations of life, stimulates all the virtuous propensities of the heart, and in the midst of all our ignorance, weaknesses and imperfections, inspires a noble assurance that raises us above ourselves, and associates us, as it were, with the divine nature. But a faith which consists in a mere blind and ignorant belief, that is alike ready, without examination and without authority, to adopt the most important truths, or the grossest absurdities; which makes no distinction between what is above, and what is repugnant to our understanding; which condemns reason as criminal, and extols its own merit in proportion to the impossibility of the thing to be believed; this is a faith that can work to no good, but rather to evil, for it tends to degrade religion, and to weaken the springs of virtue in the heart, by substituting in lieu of good works, the superior merit of a barren and unprofitable belief.

Can such a system, which places reason below the very instinct of the brutes, be suitable to intelligent natures? Is the exercise of our understanding, which alone constitutes our superiority, our exclusive distinction as intelligent, moral and social beings, to be suspended in the presence of Him who is the noblest object of its employment? Is it before Him alone that we are to appear as irrational creatures, to divest ourselves of the choicest gift which He has bestowed upon us;—by which alone we are enabled to know Him, to form just and proper notions of His being and attributes, and thereby to refine and spiritualize all our conceptions of him, to correct all low and earthly ideas of His pure and holy nature?

All experience proves that the subjection of reason to established dogmas, has ever been the corruption of religion and the degradation of the character of the Deity. Man, under such circumstances, has ever formed the lowest and most grovelling ideas of him; has assimilated him to his own nature; has attributed to him his own passions and frailties; and, as far as moral qualities are concerned, has sunk him even below the common level of humanity. And in our own religion, all founded as it is on the express revelation of God Himself, which we should have thought must have been a sure preservative of its purity, do we not trace the operation of the same principle, the same disposition in man to *humanize* the nature of the Deity, to force assent to doctrines that tend to associate Him with his own passions and feelings?

When you say that it is your duty to believe in certain dogmas, though they may be opposed to your reason, you profess to do that which is impossible. It is a mere self-delusion. You cannot assent to what your understanding repugns. Belief is an act of the judgment, and cannot therefore be accorded to what is opposed to reason. Were it possible to believe what is *irrational*, it would be necessary

to disbelieve the converse, which is *rational*; a deduction that would lead to the most tremendous consequences, which would induce an universal scepticism, would destroy all confidence in the most self-evident proposition, and would at once plunge us in an ocean of doubt and uncertainty.

There are fundamental truths, necessarily self-existing, which nothing can alter or destroy, and on which the immutability of God's essence may be said to depend. Infinity; eternity; the same thing cannot be, and not be, at the same time; all the primary truths of mathematics: these are independent of all accident, all circumstance, all power. This is not limiting the divine perfections, it is the foundation on which they repose; for were there no primary axioms, no original basis of truth, they would rest on nothing fixed and stable. What is possible God can do; to say that he can do what is impossible, is absurd; it would be a defect in his character, an argument of weakness, not of power, for it would prove that there was no such thing as truth in the abstract; it would therefore annihilate the very essence of the divine nature; it would create something external and more powerful, *chance*; it would be to say, that what is true to-day may be false to-morrow, and consequently His divine perfections would depend on accident.

Whatever is in itself essentially true, must be eternally so, and partakes of the divine nature, and cannot be subject to change. When you profess, therefore, to believe that what is impossible may be effected, that what is absurd may be made rational, or that what is true may be made false, you shake all the foundations of faith, and upset all our notions of the immutability of God.

What then is this boasted faith of yours, which you regard as so meritorious, and on which you plume yourselves as a proof of your piety and humility? You deprive it of its only

basis, that on which all truth and religion repose—the never-changing attributes of the Deity.

Whatever, therefore, may be the result of an enquiry into this subject, whether it may change or confirm your present belief, have no fear of calling reason to your aid. It is the only means by which you can ever distinguish truth from error. Your faith must be founded on reason; you must know what it is that you believe, and the grounds on which you believe, or there would be nothing monstrous in nature that you might not adopt. Christ himself, in the midst of all his stupendous works, still appeals to the reason of the Jews for the confirmation of their faith: he required them to examine the nature and character of his miracles, as a proof that the power by which he wrought them could proceed from God alone. If the Jews, then, would have been authorized to disbelieve the divine origin of Christ's miracles, had the tendency of them been otherwise than of a benevolent kind; so be assured that no doctrines which in like manner are at variance with the character of the Divinity, can ever be founded on any revelation of Himself. Are we then, you will ask, to reject what is enjoined because it is opposed to our reason, or inconsistent with *our* notions of the divine attributes? I reply, that whatever is clearly enjoined on us, it is our duty to receive; but fortunately our faith is never put to these trials; the Scriptures no where command what is opposed to reason; and it is little less than impiety to believe that any thing false or evil can proceed from the Author of all truth and goodness. Whenever we find ourselves involved in such difficulties, it is not the sacred writings that are chargeable therewith; it is the folly, and I may add the wickedness of man, that would found upon them his own vain conceits and inventions, whereby he has done more to retard the propagation of Christianity, and has been the cause of more

incredulity, than all the writings of professed infidels; and in those countries where such opinions have been forcibly upheld by violence and persecution, they have so changed the character of our religion, as to destroy nearly all its influence and utility, and to leave of it little else than the name.

The exercise of our reason, therefore, so far from being criminal, is a paramount duty, as the only means of preserving our religion free from corruption. It is not for the purpose of opposing it to its doctrines, but the better to enable us to ascertain what those doctrines are, that we may not fall into the great error of substituting human authority for the injunctions of Scripture, and thus form opinions which are neither in unison with it, nor with the character of the Deity.

It is by this allowable exercise of reason, that Christianity has already been purified from many gross errors with which it had been incorporated. The doctrine of Transubstantiation was for centuries the universal belief of the Church. And here let me ask you, why do you reject this dogma? Is it not founded on the plain and literal language of Scripture? "Eat, drink, this is my body, this is my blood." Does it contain anything in itself impossible? What is it but effecting, in another and extraordinary manner, what is constantly taking place in the ordinary course of nature? Are you warranted in your rejection of it by other texts of Scripture? No; you reject it because upon examination you have decided, that the figurative and not the literal sense of the text is the more rational interpretation. If you therefore venture, upon your own authority, to reject an established dogma founded on the direct language of Scripture, which contains in itself nothing impossible, nothing that shocks reason and common sense; are you bound to receive with implicit confidence, and is it culpable in you to submit to the same test of examination, another doctrine, which is not

founded on the direct language of Scripture, and which does shock reason and common sense? If I prove to you, that there is no proposition which can be submitted to your understanding, which contains more palpable contradictions, more gross absurdities, more utter impossibilities, than your doctrines of the incarnation and the Trinity, surely it must induce you to hesitate before you will venture, on the ground of a few disputable passages, to adopt a belief so at variance with truth and reason. The professed supporters of these dogmas, who know how little they will bear examination, do well in recommending you to believe, and not to reason; following herein the example of their great prototype the Church of Rome. And what blessed work did it not make of our religion, under this proscription of reason! For myself I declare that I scarcely recognize one feature of genuine Christianity in the whole external of Popery. In the constitution of its hierarchy, in the forms of its worship, its images, its pictures, its burning tapers, its incense, in all its rites and ceremonies, in its processions, its tutelar saints and local divinities, and I may add its *dii penates*, in its particular customs, and popular superstitions, and in all its influence on individual belief, I see nothing but the revival of Paganism under another name. And it is impossible to say, under this system of implicit faith, to what point of degradation both religion and human nature might not have fallen, but for the intervention of fortunate circumstances, that aroused the energies of the human mind, and emancipated reason from the bondage in which it was held. And so it ever will be, when man can consent to abandon his understanding, and to believe without enquiry. Religion will ever be perverted to the worst purposes; however pure its source, it must necessarily become contaminated by passing through the foul and corrupted medium of human passions, and prejudices, and interests.

I have dwelt the longer on this important point, as I wished to convince you, that the same freedom of discussion is as necessary upon this, as on any other subject ; that in all cases it is essential to the discovery and the maintenance of truth, for that without this even truth itself becomes perverted, and degenerates into error. Exercise, therefore, freely your own understandings ; assert the right of individual judgment ; bow down implicitly before no human authority ; emancipate yourselves from the fetters which have been imposed upon you, by the crafty policy of the world ; for never can you enter into the temple of truth, if you consent to leave reason at the threshold. You might as well attempt to read this letter with your eyes shut, as to pursue this enquiry to any effect, if you will not consent to open the eyes of your understanding. I require your assent to no unintelligible or impossible propositions, but to plain, palpable, self-evident truths : in the following reasoning, admit only those inferences from which you cannot dissent ; and be not diverted from this by any fear of the consequences to which it may lead you, for be assured that truth, reason, and the Scriptures will never be found at variance.

Before we proceed, therefore, to consider how far your opinions on these subjects rest on scriptural authority, we will previously examine them independently of revelation, which will enable us to arrive at a more satisfactory conclusion in the end ; for you must admit, that the language of Scripture upon these points, cannot be of that positive and determinate nature as to preclude all doubt with respect to the truth of the opinions you espouse, inasmuch as many wise and candid enquirers have drawn from it totally opposite conclusions. Whatever is clearly announced, must be implicitly received, and can admit of no discussion. But when dogmas are presented which rest upon no sufficient evidence, and which

therefore can plead only human authority for their support, it behoves us to enquire into them, and see how far they are agreeable to reason, and to our best notions of the divine character; and our interpretation of those passages which have a reference to them, should be most materially influenced thereby.

I propose therefore, in the first place, to enquire into the reasonableness of these doctrines, apart from their connection with revelation. You ought to have no objection to go along with me in this examination, for you cannot fear any result to which it may lead, for the more irrational they may appear in themselves, the more meritorious will be your faith. Not that I think you will go the length of asserting, with the venerable saint of old, that their very impossibility is the cause of your belief; on the contrary, I expect that you will candidly admit that the more difficulty there is in reconciling anything to our understanding, the more does it require that the evidence on which it rests should be clear and strong. If, in subsequently proceeding to enquire how far these doctrines are or are not supported by the authority of revelation, I find therein passages that are seemingly in direct opposition to them, then the evidence in their favour ought to be still more clear and strong; and when again I examine the very passages themselves, which you adduce as evidence, and I find that they are capable of another interpretation, which reconciles them at once both to my reason and to the language of Scripture elsewhere, I feel myself obliged, as a candid enquirer, to admit this interpretation, and not to sacrifice my love of truth to any preconceived opinion. If then, in the first place, I can succeed in convincing your reason; if, in consequence of what has been said, you will allow your reason to be convinced of the utter impossibility and absurdity of these doctrines, I will still not demand your rejection of them on this account, for I know the subordination in which your reason is held by

your faith. For myself I frankly avow that no evidence could force me to admit that which my reason repugned, for no external evidence can ever prove that to be true which is innately false. If a miracle were to be wrought, though it would be impossible that such a discrepancy could exist, to prove to me that the same figure was both round and square, that the same liquid was at once pure wine and pure water, I confess that, with my previous conception of figure and the nature of the two liquids, I should rather suppose that the miracle was an imposition upon my senses, than give credit to such palpable untruths ; and yet, short of absurdity, there is nothing that I am not willing to believe on sufficient evidence, nor is there any one who has a more humble feeling of the fallibility of human reason.

We will therefore, without any farther hesitation, examine into the reasonableness of these doctrines ; and we will resume the question of the incarnation where we left it, by an enquiry into the possibility of the union of a perfect and imperfect, of a divine and human nature in the same substance.

LETTER III.

I cannot more effectually prove to you the impossibility of this union of a finite and infinite nature in one substance, than by exposing to you the enormous inconsistencies which your own explanation of it involves.

You say that the Godhead is composed of three Persons, forming one substance, without body or parts ; that the second Person of this substance became incarnate, and that in this state, formed of body and bones, he sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, God and man, one substance Christ, *never to be divided*. Now, on this your own statement, how

can this person form a part of the Godhead? How can this *inseparable* substance, having parts and body, belong to a substance which has *no* parts or body? According to your own account, this indivisibility of the two natures must be his complete exclusion; for if Christ do form a part of a Godhead without body, it can only be in his divine, *separate* from his human nature. But as you say that they are not, and never to be divided, it must follow that the whole substance Christ must be in the Godhead; which, in this case, must have both body and parts, or, which is absurd, a *material* must form part of an *immaterial* substance: the undivided substance Christ united with the body, is yet in the Godhead without body.

You cannot, by any ingenuity, explain away the palpable contradictions of this your own statement. According to you, the second Person must exist at the same time in the immaterial Godhead, and in the material substance, Christ. But how can he exist in the latter, but as an abstraction from that which you declare to be without parts, the Godhead? And how, in the former, but as a separation from that which you declare to be inseparable, the two natures?*

*The way in which the two natures were united in the person of Christ was a much agitated question at the commencement of the 5th century. According to the Orthodox opinion, they were so intimately blended, as to form but one sole indissoluble identity, insomuch that the Virgin Mary could, with equal truth, be said to be the mother of God, as of Christ; that the Verb, by its hypostatic union with the flesh, was born, suffered and was resuscitated with the body; and yet, at the same time, its eternity, its insolubility, and its impassibility, were maintained by all the different Councils. Into such gross contradictions were they led, by their love of dispute and scholastic subtlety. It was seriously discussed whether one or all of the terms *Theotocos*, *Christotocos*, *Anthropotocos*, should be applied to the Virgin; anathema was pronounced accordingly, and eternal salvation was made to depend upon the choice of a word. Now, there are only two possible ways in which the two natures could be joined in the person of Christ.

Again, you say that the second Person of the *indivisible* Godhead became incarnate in Christ. Can any language be more contradictory of itself? For, observe, it is the Son *alone* who becomes incarnate, for he is on this very account, as you say, inferior to the Father. He is *individually* and *separately* affected. Now, this is plainly impossible, if there be any meaning in the terms you employ; if your definitions are to be adhered to. As one connected, inseparable unity, if the Son became incarnate, the whole Godhead must alike have become so. As one essence, no change could happen to the one, that did not alike affect the whole. To designate the second Person as *specially* affected, is as manifest a division of the Godhead, as palpable a separation of a part, as words can express.

They were either blended or separate; they partook of each other's qualities, or they retained their proper characters; they formed essentially one substance, one being, Christ, (which is the doctrine of your Church,) or they were essentially two beings: there can be no medium.

In the first case, the one substance being composed of human and divine qualities, must have been imperfect.

In the second case, the human part partaking not of the divine part, Christ could no more be God, than Peter was the Holy Ghost: they were still separate substances, as before. If blended, they partook of each other's nature; for if not, then they were not blended, but each remained distinct; God very God, and man mere man.

It cannot be objected to this reasoning, that God, being an immortal and immutable essence, might intermix with humanity without suffering change; for this only proves the impossibility of God blending himself with any imperfect nature; the very term blending necessarily implying change. It is an absolute solecism to say, that a perfect nature can be subject to change. When an alteration takes place in the state of any being, it loses what was before its distinctive character. If perfection undergo change, it becomes imperfection. A liability to this can never be incident to a perfect nature. The immutability of God, is that on which all his other divine perfections rest; and to deny this quality, is but one remove from pure Atheism.

It is the monstrous absurdity of your fundamental proposition of a Trinity in Unity, which involves you in all these gross inconsistencies. Three existences, each of them separately perfect, yet together making but one perfect ! Three persons, each of them very God, yet forming together but one God ! Not one, observe, by uniformity of character, of purpose, and of action, but numerically one, one unity, one sole God, without parts. I say that this surpasses all my conception. To me, nothing appears more clear, than that three perfect beings must for ever remain three perfect beings, distinct, separate, independent, for ever incapable of any modification or change. But setting aside this objection, arising from the perfection of their natures, your position cannot be true in any case.

That a part is less than the whole ; that that which is composed of parts must contain parts, are propositions that are intuitively true, that require no proof, which are so palpable and self-evident, that the mind cannot reject them. If such axioms can be disputed or denied, what is truth ? If we can be persuaded out of our confidence in such fundamental principles, doubt and error must ever be our lot ; truth can never be with us ; for that which we reject must ever be more certain than that which we admit. But this statement of three Gods, forming together but one God, is only a part of the absurdity which your hypothesis includes. I am further under the necessity of admitting, that this simple uncompounded unity, without parts, must nevertheless contain the three distinct parts of the Trinity ; for there must always be a person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. For if not, why do you use the word Trinity, which necessarily implies the existence of three, and of three apart ; and if it be not meant that they do in reality so exist, the word is an abuse of terms ; but if they do so exist, how can I believe in the simple unity ?

I do not think that it is possible, in the whole compass of language, to unite in three words such confusion of sense, such glaring inconsistencies, as in this phrase, Trinity in Unity. Both cannot be at once. God cannot be with and without parts at the same time; he cannot be two different things. If he have parts, his unity is impossible; and if he have not parts, to assert the simultaneous existence of the Trinity is a mockery of common sense. What! is my credulity to be practised upon to such an extent, that I am to believe, and not to believe, at the same time? To assert, that the same thing is, and is not? But it goes beyond credulity. I may believe that the decapitated martyr took up his head and walked, for though improbable, it is not impossible. But what you require is impossible. Here is a round substance, which you tell me I must believe to be square; and not content with this exercise of my faith, you add that, believing it to be square, I must nevertheless not deny it to be round. When doctrines such as these are submitted to my belief, with all the additional dogmas and definitions of your creeds and articles, making confusion worse confounded, I am under the necessity of rejecting them; for neither I, nor any one, can admit that of the meaning of which we are ignorant. Your statements are as unintelligible as if you spoke in an unknown tongue; and I will venture to say, that, from the first invention of this hypothesis to the present hour, in the *true* sense of the word, it never has, nor can have had, one single believer. There are many, who, without reflection or examination, give to it an idle assent, and fancy that they believe; but they deceive themselves. There may be others, who, from different motives, profess to believe; but the truth is not in them.

You yourselves, perhaps, have never yet submitted this question to so close an examination, nor been fully aware of the extent to which your faith exacts the prostration of your understanding. If you admit the above reasoning to be true,

if you cannot disprove the justness of my arguments, there is nothing left but to abide by the result. You must not turn away from the truth, or seek to hide it from you under a veil of mystery and sophistry ; like the bird of night, that draws a film across its eyes, when the light of day becomes too powerful. If we are to abandon the most self-evident truths, the most warranted conclusions, from certain secret misgivings, from vague fears that after all we *may* be in error, we had better at once renounce reason as worse than useless, as a faithless guide, leading us, under the appearance of truth, to inevitable error. But it is certain that if the premises be true, and the conclusion just, reason is not fallible, and cannot deceive ; for what is based on truth, cannot be false. When we say that the same being cannot at once be two different beings ; that the same body cannot be both square and round, we cannot err in these judgments, and we must abide by conclusions drawn from such undoubted data, or we must doubt for ever, and of every thing.

These and many other insurmountable difficulties arise from the very nature of the dogma itself, without viewing it in connection with our Saviour's history. It is not my intention to break in upon the plan which I have proposed, by an anticipation of the arguments from Scripture ; the few following references thereto, are not so much to disprove by its authority this union of the two natures, as to shew that, even by your own admission, it forms, with the life and doctrine of our Saviour, one series of anomalies and contradictions. His language is everywhere that of inferiority and dependence, so frequently and so emphatically asserted, that you cannot reconcile it, but by an appeal to his human, apart from his divine nature ; a miserable evasion, and the more inexcusable in you, as it is the direct contradiction of your fundamental doctrine, their inseparability.

You say that the one substance Christ was in every thing the same as the Father, except in its relation to body. How comes it, then, that we see this same substance avowing his subordination, not as touching his material nature, but in his spiritual essence; in all divine qualities, power, wisdom, goodness. This avowal can only be reconciled, but by supposing that the divine kept itself distinct and aloof from the human part, so that neither the body nor the reasonable soul within it were empowered or enlightened by it. If then he was thus unconscious of this indwelling, there could have been no sympathy between them; he must have spoken, and acted, and suffered in his human nature; he must in every thing have appertained to humanity, except as to that portion of the divine spirit with which, like Peter or Paul, he was endowed. In what then consisted the validity of the incarnation, or the atonement? For any imaginable purpose, the second Person might as well have been in the bodies of the two Apostles, or any where else. On the other hand, if he *was* conscious of the indwelling of this Divinity; if, as you say, it was united to him as perfectly, and in the same way, as his reasonable soul and body, then he could not, under its influence, avow his ignorance and his weakness.* Yet we see him applying to the Father for support, when he must, as the effect of this union, have been of himself equally capable of sustaining his human infirmities. So far from this, he avows expressly that it was the Father which worked within

*The junction of body with mind is not as that of two material substances, which can be effected without any intermixture of their separate parts; a spiritual incorporation must pervade and animate the mass to which it is attached, or there can be no union, no connection, no mutual operation of the one on the other.

————— “*Spiritus intus alit*

“*Mens agitat molem toto se corpore miscet.*”

him ; nay, far more, that the support he derived, that the wisdom and power he displayed, came not only from the Father, but that it *could* come from *no other source* ; an acknowledgment not only of his ignorance of the indwelling of the second Person, but of its *existence altogether*. Such a declaration was impossible in the mouth of Him, with whom it was as essentially united as the human soul and body ; (see Athanasian Creed). Admitting that, for wise reasons, this power lay quiescent during his ministry, still it existed, though inactive ; but this is alike rendered impossible by this same assertion, that the Father was the *sole* and *only* source of all power. It avails you nothing to say, that this union was not perfected till after his ascension ; for, even then, there is the same acknowledgment of inferiority : witness his answers to the two questions respecting Zebedee's children, and the time of the last day ; and St. Paul declares also, that he must, in the end, surrender the authority which had been entrusted to him. Now all these apply to his heavenly state, so that under no circumstances can the divinity and inseparability of this substance be maintained ; for the want of power and knowledge here avowed, cannot consist either with the one or the other, and must therefore be referred to his human nature ; and this, with the most glaring inconsistency, you are the first to do, for you hesitate not, as it may suit your convenience, to appeal to the two natures separately or conjointly. Thus, when justice required an infinite satisfaction, it was necessary that a Divinity should atone ; but when is urged the extreme folly, the stupidity of supposing that a perfect nature can be exposed to the imperfections of humanity ; that an immortal spirit can become subject to death, oh ! then it was only in his human nature that he suffered. Why, if so, I ask you again, where was the infinite satisfaction ? The great merit of the sacrifice was the suffering, not of the

human, but of the divine nature; and to render this efficacious, we must suppose that the Son did substantially, not figuratively, enter into the flesh; that He remained there, suffered therein, descended into hell, and after three days ascended. Your alternate appeals to the two natures, when this and similar inconsistencies are presented to you, is a mere evasion of difficulties, which you know not how otherwise to answer. When insurmountable difficulties are opposed to his divinity, you refer them to his humanity; when his humanity is objected to, you assert his divinity; at one time inseparably united, at another distinct and apart.

But by what authority do you appeal to these two natures? Does Christ himself acknowledge this distinction? Does he ever speak in any other than one capacity? Does he at one time proclaim his exclusive divinity, and appropriate to himself the authority of a God, and at another acknowledge the weakness and fallibility of a man? No; he speaks throughout as an individuality, as one being always dependent upon the Father. "I who am the Christ, the Son, the Prophet, the Law-giver, the Worker of miracles, declare that I am all this, not of my own power, but by that of my Father, who is greater than I. I exercise extraordinary powers, but they were lent to me: in me does certainly operate a divine spirit, but it is communicated to me by the Father who sent me." Of whatever nature or essence he was, these powers, he says, "I cannot have of myself. I derive them, and can derive them from no other source than the Father." This solemn attestation to His superiority over all other natures or substances whatever, this reference to Him as the *sole* source of all authority, is the unanswerable refutation of your doctrine; for after this how is it possible to assert that the divine spirit in Christ was the second Person of the Trinity, independent of, equal to, and of the same substance as, that of the Father,

when He himself asserts that this very spirit was an emanation from the Father, to enable him to execute his commission. To a declaration so explicit, what can you oppose? You cannot here avail yourselves of one of those subterfuges, which is your only resource when the argument presses irresistibly upon you. The Father and the Son are not to be confounded; the one is not comprehended in the other. In the acknowledgment of His paramount authority, the Father is alone and separate; you yourselves have made the distinction; you have declared, that in Christ was no other Divinity than that of the second Person, *solely* and *exclusively*; for on account of this very indwelling He was, as you say, in this respect inferior to the Father. Here then are two doctrines in diametrical opposition to each other; *yours*, that the Divinity in Christ was the second Person of the Trinity, altogether apart from that of the Father; and *that of Christ*, that in him resided no other Divinity but that of the Father. Such contrary statements it is impossible to reconcile. One must be rejected. The former is of human, the latter of divine origin. To me it is a dangerous thing to oppose myself to the words of Christ, so clearly and so repeatedly expressed. I have no faith but in these words: and I cannot consent to forego this faith in favour of an unintelligible jargon of metaphysical subtleties, that serve only to perplex my understanding; to confound all my notions of what is just and true; to involve me in endless difficulties; forcing me at every step into the grossest contradictions; affirming what I have denied, and denying what I have affirmed. Such a system I could, under no circumstances, receive; but to receive it in opposition to the language of Christ, is to prefer human to divine authority; the mere conceits of man, to the truths of inspiration.

At first view it may justly excite our surprise, that such a

doctrine has been for 1600 years, and is at this moment, the belief of nearly all Christendom. But this surprise will cease when we reflect, that the great bulk of mankind have no opinion of their own, and that the remainder are immediately interested in the perpetuating of whatever is established; that numbers have never been any test of truth, for rarely has it resided with the many. All sound principles, not only in religion, but in morals, in politics, in philosophy, have worked their way through impediments and obstacles of every kind. History sufficiently confirms this remark; nor is it difficult to assign the cause. The few who voluntarily expose themselves to obloquy and persecution, by an opposition to established prejudices and abuses, can rarely be actuated but by a love of truth; whilst there is no folly or absurdity which the mass of mankind have not at all times been ready to adopt, and to defend with a zeal proportioned to their ignorance. Thus it is that all abuses in government, all false doctrines and corruptions in religion, are perpetuated from one generation to another, and that truth of every kind makes such slow progress in the world; but, happily, though slow, it is sure; for there is in it an innate force, an intrinsic energy, which sustains it against all the attacks of ignorance and fanaticism. It is owing to this, that Christianity has been enabled to erect itself on the ruins of Paganism; that the Reformation has prevailed against the enormous power and abuses of the Romish Church; and that the errors, of which, as a scion of Popery, the Reformation itself partook, are in their turn yielding to the simple, genuine, and unsophisticated doctrine of the New Testament.

LETTER IV.

HAVING endeavoured to convince you, as far as reason is concerned, of the utter impossibility of the union or blending of a divine and human nature in the same substance, and its irreconcilableness with our Saviour's history; we will now see how far it is so, in a moral point of view, with the character of the Deity, and with that homogeneity of the different Persons of the Godhead, which is so forcibly inculcated by the language of your creed, where it is said, that each is the express image of the other, each of the whole, and the whole of each. The terms in which this perfect similarity is asserted, are precise, fixed, and definite, such as they ought to be, on a subject on which eternal salvation depended. Now, if I prove to you, that according to your own history of the incarnation, this similarity neither did, nor could exist; that the parties were evidently actuated by different motives, and pursued a different conduct; it must follow, that if your definition of the Trinity be true, the history of the incarnation is false; or if the history be true, the definition is not so; for two things which oppose one another cannot both be true.

When it is said of the different parts of the Trinity, that the one is the express image of the other, it is meant that they are identical in character, so that they can in no way be distinguished one from the other; that they are all alike perfect in their moral attributes; wise, good and just in the same degree, and in the same manner. "The Father and the Son," says Origen, "are both separately worshipped as truth, and therefore, have but one and the same will;" a will, you must observe, not merely the result of agreement, but, according to the doctrine of your Church, of a physical and essential union, so that what is done by the one, must neces-

sarily be done by the other. There can, therefore, be no difference of feeling or determination, no opposition of opinion, no diversity of action, as this would necessarily imply imperfection, for where there are two conducts, and the one is perfect, the other must be imperfect. Whatever, therefore, perfect love or justice enjoined, must be alike enjoined by both. Now the perfect *justice* of the Father required the punishment of an offending world; but the Son's *love* for it prevented the execution of this justice. It is evident, therefore, that in this transaction, justice predominated over love in the one case, and love over justice in the other. Here then we see, on the same occasion, and under the same circumstances, two different conducts. If justice demanded punishment, why did the Son oppose it? If justice did not demand it, why did the Father require it? If the Father's justice was perfect, the Son's must have been imperfect. If the love of the latter was perfect, that of the former could not have been so. To deny the truth of this reasoning, is to deny the whole history of the transaction; for nothing can be more conclusive, than that the actors on this occasion were not *identical*, nor an *express* image the one of the other, nor alike in their moral attributes. To say the contrary is preposterous, since justice and love have their distinctive characters as strongly defined, as justice and injustice.*

In speaking of this transaction, you have always the words "justice of God" in your mouths, as on other occasions you talk of the union of the divine and human nature, of the Trinity in Unity, &c., which are certain forms of speech to which you have been so long accustomed, that they slide off from your tongues as glibly as the most ordinary phrases, and

* Whether you explain the Godhead as three times the same thing, or as one substance, it is evident that the Persons contained therein can in no sense be regarded as one and the same.

without more exciting your attention to their real import. Let us then stop for a moment, and enquire a little into the meaning of this phrase, "justice of God," in reference to this transaction.

What is justice? To do right, to abstain from wrong; to recompense or punish, according to merit or demerit. If punishment be proportioned to the offence, it is just; if it exceed, it is unjust; if it be inflicted where there is no offence, it is the highest injustice. The justification of punishment is not the pleasure of inflicting it, but reformation and example. If innocence suffer, and guilt escape, the great object of justice is frustrated; it tends more to encourage than restrain offence. Such are the principles by which human justice is, or ought to be, regulated. When man had thrown off his allegiance to the Divinity, had violated all His laws, and become so desperately wicked, that there were no hopes of his redemption by ordinary means, he had forfeited all claims to the Divine favour, and God had abandoned him to that punishment which His offended justice required. So far there is nothing which militates against our notions of justice. But was he so visited? Were the wicked punished? No; they escaped; but another victim was chosen, pure, holy, unspotted, and whom God distinguished, from the love he bore him, as his only Son. And why was *He* punished? If atonement was necessary, let the guilty atone; but the guilty escape, and the innocent suffer. Let us bring this home directly to our own feelings and principles; and let us exemplify it, by imagining a parallel case in the course of human affairs. Suppose the subjects of some Potentate to have risen in rebellion against his lawful authority, and by their crimes to have justly incurred his indignation; that at the moment of inflicting upon them a merited punishment, his only son intercedes for the guilty, offering himself as a victim to his father's

anger. By what name should we designate the conduct of that parent, who, under such circumstances, would find satisfaction in the sacrifice of his unoffending offspring? Should we not call it by any other name than justice? Cruelty, injustice of the highest form. Yet we scruple not to accuse of such conduct, the great Parent of the universe, who is slow to anger, who punisheth in mercy, who, so far from seeking vengeance, commands us to pardon offences, to return good for evil, to love our enemies. Can He, who could satiate His vengeance on the innocent, preach this great lesson of charity, and peace, and good-will to others? And dare we thus ascribe to God, what we should turn from with abhorrence in man? Is His justice of a different kind from that by which He has taught us to regulate our own conduct? No; there is no difference. God hath made man in His own image; He hath given to every one, to distinguish right from wrong; He hath instructed him by revelation, by the mouth of His prophets, by the word of Christ himself; He hath instructed him in his duties; He hath given him a code of moral laws, which the more he follows, the more he is told he assumes the likeness of God, the nearer approach he makes to His divine perfections. When we assert, therefore, that there is but one standard of justice, we err not; we are not fallible here; the voice of nature, and the voice of revelation, confirm that there are no two kinds of justice; it is one, eternal and immutable, fixed as the throne of God; a part of the Divinity itself, from everlasting to everlasting the same. Let us not fear then to bring this subject to the test of those principles of justice, which God has implanted in the hearts of every man, which our reason confirms, and which is sanctioned by His own revealed word.

Thus in whatever point of view this dogma be regarded, rationally, morally, physically, religiously, or scripturally,

there is not a single spot of tenable ground on which it can rest : you are driven from one difficulty to seek refuge in another ; on every side you are affronted by a mass of absurdities and incongruities, such as, I verily believe, no other subject could possibly exhibit. If you were in like manner to submit your belief to the test of reason, and to the precepts and spirit of our religion, you would tremble at the nature of many of your opinions. But what has once been received as an article of faith, you are afraid of afterwards too closely examining ; and though repugnant both to your understanding and your feelings, you are yet ready to receive it as a mystery ; not considering, that no mystery can be repugnant to, though it may be beyond our reason ; and that we ought not to credit any thing, whose existence is not as evident to the understanding or the senses, as the nature of it is unintelligible. Infinity, eternity, the existence of evil, the union of mind and body, miracles, are mysteries ; we are surrounded by mysteries, of the existence of which we are certain, and in which there is nothing contradictory, nothing impossible, nothing derogatory to the Divine perfections. But when we are required to believe mysteries, which are replete with absurdities, and which have no existence but in our own conceits, we are bound, as rational beings, to regard them as impositions upon our understandings, which we neither can, nor ought to believe. But, alas ! it is our misfortune, that on all these subjects we abandon our understandings, to devote ourselves to a blind credulity. Whenever the character and conduct of the Deity are concerned, there is a kind of superstitious feeling, a dread, an awe, that hangs over the mind, and paralyzes its faculties. It is this principle in human nature, that has been the cause, at every period of time, of the greatest abuses in religion, and has led the way to the most horrid excesses. To this it is owing, that all the religions

of the world have united in representing the character of the Deity under the most formidable and terrific appearances : and let not us Christians deceive ourselves ; for we are far more culpable than they, who had only the light of nature ; but we have wilfully perverted and misconstrued that revelation which He has made of Himself ; we have transformed a God of peace and love, into a Spirit of evil ; cruel, vengeful and implacable. The most benighted of the children of darkness have never presented Him to our view under so tremendous a form, as the creed of almost every sect of Christians, not excepting that Establishment of which you profess yourselves members. The God of Christianity is a God, whose justice delighteth in the punishment of the innocent ; who hath adjudged to perish everlastingly, all those who will not receive, as the guide of their faith, that which they cannot understand ; who hath condemned to inevitable perdition, nine-tenths of the world, for erring in that darkness in which no fault of their own hath involved them ; who hath predestinated to everlasting punishment those whom no merit can save ; and to the enjoyment of His divine presence those, whom no enormity of crime can exclude ; who hath condemned to eternal torments, the babe of a span long ; who hath exposed for the fault of one, the whole race of man, not to the pains and miseries of this transitory being, but of that where the worm never dieth, and the fire is never quenched ; who will visit the offences of this finite and peccable state, with infinite and never-ending torments ! Such, Christians, is the God whom you have formed. Better, oh ! better had it been for man, that he had never been ; or being, that he return to that nothing, from which creative power hath called him !

It is into such errors, I may say into such impieties, that we fall when we take upon ourselves to prescribe rules of

conduct to the Deity ; when we attempt to penetrate into His inscrutable counsels, to draw aside that veil which for ever conceals His secrets from mortal eyes. It is the presumption and vain curiosity of man, which are for ever seducing him from profitable knowledge, to pursue that which availeth not, and which he can never find. Let us confine ourselves, then, within our own proper boundaries ; and in all our doubts and difficulties, let us repose ourselves with confidence on this great rock of faith, the knowledge of this first truth, that God is good ; that all is therefore good ; that evil itself is good, as a cause of greater good ; that the death of Christ was necessary to the production of a good, which could not otherwise have been attained ; that it was, in the eternal order of things, the means the best adapted to the end ; and that God consented to it for the love of this good, and not to satisfy feelings which were anything else than good. “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

LETTER V.

IN the texts to which you refer me, the terms Reconciliation, Redemption, Propitiation, &c., occur in connection with the death, and the blood, and the sacrifice of Christ ; which latter, you make to be the direct and immediate cause of the former. Your great error here is, in separating these texts from their context, and also in not taking into consideration the persons to whom the writer addressed himself, and the special object which he had in view ; for these circumstances tend essentially to qualify the meaning of particular expressions. It is in this way that we shall be much more likely

to attain to the true interpretation of these passages, than by taking the precise and definite sense of the words themselves : if we were upon this principle to interpret the sacred writings, which abound with figurative expressions, we should be perpetually involving ourselves in inextricable difficulties. There are numberless passages to which we are authorized, nay forced, to attach a figurative meaning. It frequently happens, that many of them on which much stress has been laid, are nothing more than the ordinary forms of language, common to all writers, and on all subjects. We are bought with a price ; purchased with his own blood ; healed by his stripes. So we say, a dearly-bought victory ; our emancipation from Rome has been purchased with the blood of thousands of martyrs. We are constantly adding to the copiousness and richness of language, to the force and vivacity of its expressions, by a figurative application of terms derived from every branch of science and knowledge. Strange, therefore, would it have been if the sacred writers, and more particularly St. Paul, whose whole attention had been devoted to one object, the study of the sacred writings, and the ceremonial parts of his religion ; strange indeed would it have been, if his style had not partaken of the character of his learning ; had not been replete with expressions derived from those rites and forms of the Jewish worship, of which he had been in the habitual, minute and zealous observance. Had not such allusions abounded in his writings, their authenticity might justly have been called in question. This is of itself sufficient to explain the frequent recurrence of these expressions. But that which rendered this constant application of the terms of the sacrificial law indispensable, was the argument which St. Paul had to maintain against the obstinate attachment of the Jewish converts to the practice of their ancient ceremonies. One main design of his correspondence with

the different churches, was to counteract the effect of this upon the minds of the Gentile converts: it is this object which more or less runs through every one of his Epistles, and appears in some to have been almost exclusively so; as in his addresses to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Ephesians. It is essential to a right understanding of these expressions, to take into consideration the circumstances under which St. Paul wrote, the nature of the prejudices which he had to combat, and their influence upon the conduct of those against whom his remonstrances were directed. By this it will appear, that all these controverted passages are not so much meant to be of general application, as specially adapted to the occasion, and to the peculiar notions of those persons alone to whom they are addressed. In proof of this, we will take the two first passages which occur in the writings of St. Paul, where blood is connected with the remission of sins. In arguing with the Judaizing Christians upon the inutility of the ceremonial law, that faith was now all that was necessary, he says, (Rom. iii. 25.), "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Why not simply faith in Christ? Why in his blood? The reason is obvious. Under the writer's circumstances, the word "blood" was a far more appropriate and emphatic expression, alluding at once to the blood of animals, by which propitiation was formerly sought; and the blood of Christ, through faith in which it was now effectually accomplished. It was saying to them, in one word, it is faith in *His* blood which is efficacious to propitiation, and not in the blood of animals, in which you vainly seek it. The second instance where remission of sin is connected with blood, is in the 5th chap. of this Epistle, v. 9.; "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Here justification is referred directly to blood, without any mention of that faith, the necessity of which is, in the

first instance, insisted upon, and which, throughout the whole four preceding chapters, he had been labouring by a variety of arguments to prove; always asserting, in the clearest and most unequivocal terms, not only here, but every where, the sole efficacy of faith as to justification; but, at times, figuratively ascribing it to his Death, his Sacrifice, his Blood, his Cross; a striking and forcible manner of shewing, not only that it came through him, but, at the same time, that it did not come through the ceremonial law. These two quotations exemplify the kind of argument, by which St. Paul, in opposition to the prejudices of the Jews, maintains the exclusive obligation of the new law. In spite of the influence of the new faith, the Jewish Christians could not reconcile to their deep-rooted prejudices, this abandonment of their ancient ceremonies, which they continued not only to practise themselves, but to enforce as essential upon the Gentile converts.* This conduct on their part was a great hindrance to the spread of the Gospel wherever their influence was felt, which

* The universality of the new Church was incompatible with the system of Judaism, which was too circumscribed in its operation, and too limited in its nature, to be adapted to such an extended scheme. The necessity of local worship, and the direct personal service of the High Priest, were inapplicable to a religion that was to be embraced by all mankind. If the more perfect principles of Christianity had not of themselves abrogated the ancient rites, they must necessarily have fallen into desuetude, from the impossibility of a compliance with them. It became, therefore, no longer necessary to continue an order, whose services were become useless, and whose powers were inadequate to the presidency of an universal church. But as it had been instituted by Divine appointment, it could not be set aside but by the same authority. Christ, therefore, by an universal remission of sins by faith, removed what would otherwise have been an insurmountable impediment to the progress of his religion. This alone ought to have taught the Jewish Christians, that, however necessary, as Jews, they might have considered the observance of the ceremonial law, it was impossible to extend it to the Gentile converts.

it appears to have been, wherever the establishment of a church had been effected. An insight, therefore, into the nature and origin of these prejudices, will better enable you to comprehend the true force and meaning of all those terms and phrases, levelled against them by St. Paul.

LETTER VI.

THE great object of the Ceremonial Law was the preservation of the Jews, as a distinct and separate race, specially set apart for the service of God. It was they who, alone, were supposed to be admitted into His presence, and whose worship was accepted. All the rest of the world, from its idolatrous practices, were said to be under a state of sin, and aliens from God. There existed, however, the means of becoming reconciled to Him by the law, and the law alone. By conforming to its injunction of circumcision, by the aid of sacrifices and purification, the sin under which they previously lay was expiated; a remission of it was granted; and they thereby became sanctified and reconciled, so as to be admitted to the worship of God in the Temple. There were no other possible means of reconciliation. It was an interdict passed upon all nations, from which there was no escape but through the law. However in his heart any one might have worshipped the God of the Jews, he was still unclean, and his presence would have defiled the Holy Place. This was the great point on which all turned. It was the line of demarcation, the *chorda sanitatis*, which cut off them and their religion from the rest of the world; the barrier between the old and the new law; between Judaism and Christianity. But when the universal remission of sins through faith was announced, which opened the door of the

covenant to all alike, and declared all equally qualified to be called to the knowledge and worship of God, it at once broke down this wall of partition, and destroyed all that was exclusive in the Jewish institution. It was the grandest, and, in all its consequences, the most important event which the world had ever witnessed. It was a new charter of liberty to mankind; his emancipation from the bondage of ignorance and sin: it was the rescinding of an act of excommunication, which for ages had interdicted the worship of the true God. The veil which had hitherto concealed the Holiest from mortal eyes was rent asunder, and a flood of light had issued forth, which was to penetrate into the remotest corners of the earth, and every where to dispel the darkness in which it was enveloped.

In this phrase, "remission of sin through faith," is comprehended the whole scheme of Christianity. No exclusion, no privilege. To every one according to his merit. The object of Christ's coming into the world was the remission of sin through faith; or, in other words, the universal dispensation of the Gospel. But the more the end and object of the remission of sin was of an enlarged and benevolent nature, the more was it opposed to the pride and prejudice of the Jewish nation. Were they to be no longer a favoured people, the chosen of the Lord? Was this high distinction to be taken from them? Were the privileges which they had enjoyed for ages to be rescinded? Were they to be placed on a level with other nations, sunk in all the pollutions of idolatry, whose very contact was defilement? Were such to be admitted into the presence of *their* God, and to render acceptable service through other means than those of the law? Were the unclean to approach the altar, with all their offences unexpiated, unpurified; and all the divine ordinances delivered by God to Moses to be set at naught?

To unite, therefore, with the uncircumcised in the practice of the same religion, and the worship of the same God, was so opposed to all their old habits and feelings, that they sought to impose upon the new converts all the burdens of the old law. There is no doubt that these Jewish Christians, who were settled in various parts of the Roman Empire, would exercise a great influence over the early converts. Christ was a Jew. The new religion emanated from Judea, and was a branch of Judaism. In the absence of higher authorities, they would, in some measure, be regarded as such themselves. To expose to them the inconsistency of this attachment to the practice of their ancient ceremonies with their adoption of the new religion, and to counteract their influence over the minds of the new converts, was a main object of St. Paul, in all his Epistles. In order the more clearly to convince them of the sole obligation of their new faith, and the consequent inutility of their ancient ceremonies, he applies them all directly to Christ, to shew that in him they were all completed ; that he was in reality, that of which they were but the promise. He tells them, that they no longer require a High Priest or mediator, since Christ was now constituted the High Priest and intercessor for all men ; (Heb. vii. 24, 27. viii. 1, 6.) : that it was no longer necessary to seek by circumcision the privileges of a member of the covenant, since now the only truly circumcised were those who rejoiced in Christ, (Phil. iii. 3). It was no longer necessary to seek reconciliation by sacrifices and offerings, since Christ by his cross had reconciled both Jew and Gentile by the bonds of a common faith, (Eph. ii. 14, 18). It was no longer necessary to seek outward purification by the blood of animals, since the more precious blood of Christ sanctifieth, to the purging of the conscience, and cleansing of the heart, (Heb. ix. 9—14.) It is evident, that all these allusions to the

old law were to shew, that faith in Christ had rendered all further observance of it unnecessary; for that he was "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," (Rom. x. 4). And where these allusions are applied directly to his death, "justified by his blood," (Rom. v. 9, 10,) if we did but approach the Scriptures with the same fair spirit of criticism with which we go to the consideration of any profane author, we should see that they also are nothing more than the same figurative application of the efficacy of their ancient sacrifices to the sacrifice of Christ, to shew that they were all superseded by him; that his all-sufficiency supplied the whole and every part of the ceremonial law; that he was at once the atonement, and the purification, and the sacrifice, and the blood; and it was therefore useless to seek any longer, in the practice of these ceremonies, that which they could now only effectually obtain through him. If there were no other means of shewing that all this is to be understood figuratively, the common usage of language on all occasions would sufficiently justify such a view of it, without any necessity of recurring to a literal sense. There is not a more common figure of speech, than that which gives to the substitute, the name of that of which it supplies the place, or performs the office. This figure is frequent with St. Paul; "for we are the circumcised, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ," (Phil. iii. 3.) The meaning of this is, that faith in Christ has superseded the circumcision of the flesh; Christ is now the circumcision.

Literally, justification no more came by his blood, than circumcision by faith in him. They are both alike figuratively applied to him as their substitute. But when we consider, that Christ did really fall a sacrifice, that his blood was actually shed, this phraseology would unavoidably obtrude itself upon the writer. The Jews were told to

sacrifice no more, since redemption could now only be obtained through Christ. Now it happened, that he who was commissioned by God to assure them of this, himself fell a sacrifice in the execution of his orders. Under such circumstances, could any thing be more natural than to apply to him the sacrificial language of the law, of which he was now the substitute, and to exclaim, "Yes; this is the sacrifice by which we are now effectually redeemed." They were told no longer to seek purification by blood, in order to render acceptable service to God, since the only purification now was by faith in Christ. Now he who told them this, shed his own blood in attestation of the truth of his word. Truly, then, might his followers exclaim, "Yes; this is the blood through which we shall be truly cleansed from our sins." So they were told, that on the great day of expiation it was no longer necessary, by means of a curse, to discharge all the iniquities of the people upon the head of the scape-goat, since Christ has promised to take away the sins of all who believed in him. Now he who promised them this, subjected himself to suffering, humiliation and death, in order to confirm them in this belief. Well, therefore, might they say, that it was he who had become a curse for them; that he had truly borne their iniquities; that he had paid the penalty of their offences; that by his stripes they were healed; by his sufferings they were made whole. Now I see nothing in all this language which is not perfectly natural and appropriate, and that would not necessarily suggest itself under similar circumstances. Who was the writer? A Jew. To whom was he writing? To Jews, or to converts under their influence. On what subject? To expose the sole necessity of the new, and the inutility of the old, law. And could such a correspondence be free from Jewish phrases? Could he tell them, that all their expiations, and atonements, and

their sacrifices, and their sprinklings of blood, were now superseded by faith; and under such circumstances, and with that inseparable connection in his mind between purification and blood, could he refer to this new purification, this new remission of sins, without figuratively connecting it, in the language of the old ceremonies, with the blood and the sacrifice of Christ? To suppose this, is to have but little knowledge of human nature, and the powerful influence of association in the mind.

But the most important of all the causes of this frequent connection of redemption with blood is, that all these ceremonies of the law were so many types* of Christ; the direct application of them to him was therefore imperative; no longer a matter of choice, but of necessity; it was requisite

* Different opinions may prevail with respect to the typical character of the Ceremonial Law; but the close analogy which St. Paul has drawn between the two Covenants, the way in which he specially refers to the ceremonies as *figures, signs, patterns, shadows, &c.*, can leave little doubt, that he regarded them as typical and prophetic. A similitude may exist between things where there is no direct relation; but in such case the words patterns, promises, &c., could not with propriety be applied to them, inasmuch as these terms signify, not an accidental, but a pre-ordained similitude, an intended representation of things to come; a likeness specially referable. Why does St. Paul say, that because the High Priest offered up sacrifices, so it was *necessary* that Christ also should offer up, if the sacrifice of the one had not a direct relation to that of the other? Again, it was *necessary* that men and places should be purified by blood, as the pattern of Christ's better sacrifice, (Heb. ix. 23.); that the gifts and sacrifices of the Priests were the example and shadow of heavenly things, as the tabernacle was of the pattern shewn to Moses in the Mount, (viii. 4, 5.); and this tabernacle, or holy place, he elsewhere calls the figure of the true. But in whatever light these ceremonies be regarded, it is certain that St. Paul alludes to them as illustrative of the character of the new religion, and the history of its Founder; whether, therefore, they be types or not, my argument drawn from them, as such, is equally conclusive and warranted.

to shew that in him the law was completed, and all these ceremonies received their final accomplishment: they are, therefore, referred to him, each separately, but more emphatically; as what they were in appearance, he was in reality, and supereminently so. He was not the *mortal* High Priest of the Jews, but an *immortal* one in the heavens; the intercessor for *all* men: he did not enter, purified by the blood of animals, into an earthly, but into an *heavenly* tabernacle, by the merits of his *own* blood. The Priests, by all their *daily* offerings, could never take away sin; but He by *one* offering of himself, was enabled to put it away *for ever*. By an *annual* sacrifice, the High Priest effected a *temporary* redemption of Israel; He, by *one* sacrifice, effected the eternal redemption of *all* men; by the sprinklings of blood, all things were purified, and the people cleansed from their *outward* sins; but his blood *purgeth the conscience*, and cleanseth from *all* sin. No language could be better adapted than this, to shew the folly of continuing ceremonies, the great object of which had now been attained by the fulfilment in Christ of that figurative representation, which they gave of his doctrine, his life, and his death. It was following the shadow, when they possessed the substance. As, in the original, the efficacy is directly ascribed to blood; so, as the antitype, it is in the same figurative way immediately ascribed to Christ's; but as in the former it was not the blood, but the purity which it was supposed to effect, that was the cause of reconciliation; so here, also, reconciliation was not the direct consequence of it, but of that faith to which it provoked; that moral regeneration of the heart, by all those sympathies, and emotions, and convictions, which it was calculated to excite.

Having endeavoured to explain to you the cause of this frequent application to Christ of the language of the old law, not only as that phraseology which any writer would naturally

adopt ; but indispensable to St. Paul, in pointing out the relation of the type to its antitype, where the same language would necessarily be applied to both ; it is incumbent upon me now to shew you, that these ceremonies, neither in their origin nor design, were inconsistent with this figurative sense for which I contend ; and that, as types, no inference can be drawn from them that Christ's sacrifice was instrumental to the salvation of the world as a sacrifice, *but only through its moral influence.*

LETTER VII.

WHEN you say that the Jewish atonement was a type of Christ's, you must necessarily perceive a similitude between them ; and as the expressions which refer to the latter are taken from the ceremonies of the law, they must necessarily apply to Christ in their original sense, or else they would not be a type. Now, if you will carefully examine the forms of the Jewish sacrifice, and the end it was to subserve, you will see, that there is not only no analogy between it and your atonement, but that no two things can be more essentially different, than the real character of the former, and that which you attribute to the latter. If so, your doctrine is deprived at once of its main support, inasmuch as there is no type of it in the old law, and as you must, therefore, have necessarily affixed a wrong interpretation to all these phrases respecting Christ's death.

One of the great objects of the Christian dispensation, was the abolition of the law of sacrifice. (Heb. x. 5, 6.) "*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice for sin thou wouldest not, neither hast thou pleasure therein.*" Does it not appear extraordinary, that a declaration which

was the condemnation for ever of the whole system of worship by sacrifice, was to be confirmed and ratified by the most important of all sacrifices? “*I will have no more offerings, saith the Lord.*” What consistency between this, and the offering up of Jesus as an expiatory sacrifice? I come to *abolish the first, and to establish the second.* I come to institute a new worship in spirit, altogether the reverse of that which it is to supersede. And yet, the great act confirmatory of it was in direct opposition to what he came to establish, and in direct accordance with what he came to abolish. “*Henceforth, saith the Lord, I will write my laws in their heart, and in their minds.*” (Heb. viii. 10.) The time, therefore, was now come, when all outward forms and external symbols were to be for ever abolished. It was no longer the purification of outward defilements, but that of the heart; it was not the sacrifice of the altar, but a spiritual sacrifice; it was not sin-offerings and burnt-offerings, but the offerings of a contrite spirit. “*I will have no more offerings of flesh and blood; I will henceforth be worshipped in spirit and in truth.*” And yet, contrary to the clear demonstration of the will of Him who sent him, Christ was to set the example of the greatest sacrifice that had ever been, or could be made, from the beginning to the end of the world; and this sacrifice, instead of partaking of the spirit of his new and glorious communication, was to be identified with the nature of those expiations and atonements, which God declared had for ever passed away. So that this proof of God’s love, which was to effect a reformation in the whole moral and religious state of the world, was to have no efficacy until it had been ratified by an expiatory sacrifice, of the nature of those which it had for ever forbidden. Thus, you would erect the heavenly upon the foundations of the earthly tabernacle; the New Jerusalem you would build up from the ruins of the old; the Church of

the Lord you would reconstruct from the worn-out and rejected materials of this world ; a spiritual worship, you would introduce by a carnal sacrifice ; the only offering that could now be accepted, that of the heart, was to be prefaced by an offering up of the body of Jesus ; the abolition of all outward forms of worship, by a sacrifice on which the attention of the world was to be fixed to the end of time ; and finally, an act which was the consummation of love, and charity, and mercy, was to be conceived in the spirit of that law, which exacted “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”

When I say that you make the sacrifice of Christ to partake of the nature of the expiatory sacrifices of the Temple, I am only making use of your own language, for you acknowledge the one to be a type of the other, and as such, it must necessarily partake of the character of its antitype ; but in reality, as you understand the atonement, there is nothing in the Jewish law, that offers any analogy between the character of such an event, and any of its ceremonies. The atonement, ordained by the law, was merely an act of purification. An atonement was made, not only for accidental and involuntary, but also for inevitable defilements, where no sin or disobedience could exist. An atonement was also made by fine flour, as in the case of the trespass-offering, which shews that it was by no means necessarily of a bloody character. The ceremony was precisely the same, whether it was for objects and places of worship, or for voluntary inevitable defilements ; and therefore it is deprived altogether of the character of an atonement in the common sense of the word, and cannot be regarded in any other light than as a ceremony of purification, a species of lustration, for the purpose of impressing upon the minds of the Jews, the purity with which everything ought to be presented before the

Deity. Levit. xvi, 30 ; “and made an atonement for you, to cleanse you.” On this principle it was that the leper and the woman after child-birth, were for a certain period restrained from entering into the Temple ; that no one could officiate, who laboured under any personal defect, that the sanctuary might not be profaned. In this sense, St. Paul says, that the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were purged with blood ; that the blood of goats, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh. On the great day of expiation, the atonement by the High Priest was first for himself, before his entrance into the Holiest, that he might not pollute it ; then for the holy places in general, by *hallowing them from the uncleanness of the people* ; and having thus *reconciled* them, he was finally to come forth, and offer sacrifices for a general purification of all Israel, so that *all the people might be cleansed from their sins* before the Lord.

The blood by which this purification was supposed to be effected was a mere form ; a sign of their being freed from all idolatrous and sinful defilements ; a sign, divinely instituted as a figure of that blood, by which all the world was alike to be freed from the same idolatrous and sinful defilements, and to be united in the worship of the same God, and, being thus rendered pure and holy, to be reconciled to Him. Not only do the words themselves, but the whole history of the ceremony prove, that it must be considered, not in the light of a pardon, but a cleansing, and that the sense of the word atonement, in the old law, cannot be that which you give it ; an expiation of guilt, seeing that the same ceremonies and terms are used for persons where no guilt was incurred, and for objects and places where it was impossible.

The Jewish atonement, therefore, both in its origin and in its application, must have a figurative sense. In the former, it was simply a supposed purification, and could not be an

expiation of guilt where none existed, and therefore cannot be indicative of any such quality in Christ's blood. The type must be a faithful representation of the nature of that efficacy, which we are to attribute to this. As a copy of the original, it cannot differ either in its degree or character; for if so, it would not apply, indeed it would be no longer a type; it can therefore only denote the purifying influence of Christ's blood through its moral effects; the only way in which it can have any efficacy in taking away sin. "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith;" (Acts xv. 9.) "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure;" (1 John iii. 3.) In these verses the question is plainly and literally stated. Purifying ourselves, not by the blood of the altar, nor by that of Christ, but by faith in it.

When you say, therefore, that the reconciliation of the world was the immediate consequence of Christ's blood, and refer to that effected by the blood of the altar as its type, you misinterpret equally the nature and declared object of the ceremony, and the language in which it is described. The Jewish reconciliation was not the immediate consequence of the sprinkling of blood, but of the effect which it was supposed to have produced. It is said that the holy places were reconciled to God by the sprinkling, but only on the ground of that purity which it was presumed they had thereby acquired. "And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the Lord, and make an atonement for it;.....and he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel: and when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place," &c. &c.; (Levit. xvi. 18, 19, 20.) The ground of reconciliation was the purity which was effected by the blood, and not the blood itself. This cleansing from

defilement was the great object of the ceremonial law throughout; of all their sprinklings, and sacrifices, and atonements, to render persons, and places, and things pure and holy, to be presented before God. All these, therefore, must be referable to Christ, strictly, in their original sense; for St. Paul says, that they were *shadows, patterns, figures, copies, promises*: to apply them to Christ in any other way than their real character, would be to make the copies untrue, and the promises false. The purity effected by the blood of the sacrifice, was a type of that by Christ's blood: you cannot, therefore, make reconciliation the effect of purity in the type, and of blood in the antitype; there would no longer be the slightest analogy between them.

It is said, that the sacrifices of the Temple were a sweet-smelling odour before the Lord. St. Paul speaks in the same terms of the sacrifice of Christ; we must, therefore, understand that this was so in the sense of the former. Now we cannot suppose that, as sacrifices merely, they were thus acceptable to God, from any honour or glory that He could receive therefrom, or from any motives or feelings that did not refer to the worshippers themselves. It was the spirit of obedience and devotion with which they were offered; the beneficial influence upon the minds of the people, in preserving them from idolatrous and sinful practices, and in reminding them of their duty to God. So it was, on the part of Christ, the same obedience to the Divine will, the voluntary sacrifice of himself to promote the reconciliation of the world to God, by alike turning it from the same idolatrous and sinful courses. It was this that made the sacrifice a sweet-smelling odour. And on what other grounds could it be acceptable to a Being of infinite purity and holiness? What need hath He of offerings and sacrifices? No honour can be done to His exalted nature by praises, and supplications, and worship,

under whatever forms presented; nor can He take any pleasure therein, but inasmuch as it is the voluntary tribute of the heart, and as it tendeth to the profit of him who payeth it.

In this view of the sacrifice of Christ, the analogy between it and the sacrifices of the Temple is complete. But I see no similitude between them and your atonement, either in the motive with which the offering was required, or the end it was to subserve. The efficacy of this lay in the mere act itself. The atonement was simply the sacrifice. The expiation of offence was the immolation of the victim. It was not the spirit of repentance and reformation, which is the only sanctification of prayer and offering. Such a sacrifice has no affinity, either with the nature of Judaism, or Christianity; it stands alone, an insulated fact, having nothing in its character that is allied to any dispensation of God to man; it harmonizes neither with the earthly, nor the heavenly tabernacle, but partakes only of the spirit of those offerings which were made to propitiate the anger, or conciliate the favour of a Deity, by the sacrifice of whatever was most precious.

LETTER VIII.

IF Christ had not, by his own sufferings, expiated our offences, you say that the Gate of eternal Life would have been for ever closed against *all*. It is impossible that, with such a belief, you can have felt in all its force the grandeur, and the simplicity, and the purity, of the Christian scheme. In all its demonstration, in its origin, its execution, and in its final accomplishment; the whole spirit which pervades it from beginning to end, is the love of God to Man. To

redeem a sinful and benighted world; to turn it from its vicious and idolatrous courses to the practice of virtue and of true religion, by placing before it the prospect of an immortal recompense, was the object of Christianity. The communication of it was accompanied by a series of declarations and actions, all indicative of the highest regard and benevolence towards man; and the last act, by which the whole was consummated, was the strongest proof that could be exhibited of the love of God to the world. In this, says the Apostle, "was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." That in this spirit Christianity was communicated, and that in this spirit Christ died for us, is also asserted in the most positive manner, in many other passages of the sacred writers. Now, you can have no support for your doctrine, but what is also derived from the authority of these same writers. Shew me, then, where God's abandonment of the world is announced, and His refusal to be reconciled but at the price of Christ's blood? Before such a tremendous doctrine as this can be erected into a dogma, it must be authorized by the clearest and most explicit language. Where is this language? From Genesis to Revelations, point out to me a single passage where this is avowed. I do not admit your own interpretation of insulated phrases, which we shall see have a far different, and more simple and rational meaning; but I require from you what is positive and decisive; shew me a whole, entire, and connected sentence, where it is stated, in plain and simple language, that God's justice was so offended by man's wickedness, that He required, as a satisfaction, the innocent blood of Christ? It is not a phrase in this place, and a phrase in that place; a word here, and a word there, brought together in order to eke out a system. I will have no ambiguous phraseology, no

passages on which two opinions have been formed. I am not going to abandon the certain for the uncertain ; nor will I readily believe that love, the prime attribute of the Deity, the source of all our hopes and all our consolations, is subordinate to qualities that are calculated only to excite awe and fear. For myself, I find no such language ; and yet you must shew it me, and in as clear terms also, before the effect of texts like the above can be negatived in my mind. I see also, in the general spirit and character of the whole Book, what is at total variance with such an hypothesis. The language is every where replete with declarations of the forbearance and long-suffering of God ; of His readiness to pardon those who approached Him with a repentant spirit. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live;" (Ezek. xviii. 23.) "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever;" (Psalms ciii. 9.) "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy;" (Mic. vii. 18.) In the New Testament, the character of God is represented under a still more endearing point of view, as a kind Father, ever ready to receive his disobedient children on their returning to Him. "And if so be that he findeth it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more over that sheep, than over the ninety and nine that went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish;" (Matth. xviii. 13, 14.) "The Lord is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" (2 Pet. iii. 9.) Is it possible for any language to be more condemnatory of your doctrine? And every where it is the same. God is always spoken of in the same terms, ever more willing to reclaim than to punish ; never, as having alienated Himself from man. In His severest displeasure

against the iniquities of his people, He declares that He will not wholly reject them, for He was still the Lord their God. In the most tremendous visitation of His anger, a remnant was still saved in the Ark. The very institutions of Judaism and Christianity are a proof of His constant solicitude, and regard for the world. Was it not the great object of the former, to keep alive in the minds of men the knowledge and worship of Himself? And for this purpose, did He not raise up, from time to time, a succession of Prophets and wise men; and the more effectually to accomplish this, did He not, in the end, send Christ into the world, that he might be the means of reconciling all to Himself? Yet, in opposition to all this demonstration of love and kindness, you would, on the ground of a few ambiguous words and phrases, represent the Deity as under the influence of motives the very reverse. He, who declares that He cannot retain His anger, because He delighteth in mercy, yet passes a sentence of universal condemnation, irrevocable but at the price of innocent blood! He, who represents Himself as a kind Father of all, ever anxious to reclaim His disobedient children, "not willing that one of them should perish," yet rejects from His presence even those who had never offended! The Shepherd who feeds His flock, and carries the lambs in His bosom, and seeks to recover the sheep that had strayed, yet abandons those who remained in the fold, to perish with the rest in the wilderness.

Had we not God's revealed word to appeal to, to correct such erroneous conceptions of Him, we might still with equal confidence affirm, that such feelings and such a conduct can never be those of a perfect Being. For He can receive no wrong or offence from us. He can harbour no resentment. He can have no pride to gratify; no injuries to redress. It is the good of the offender only that He seeks; and if He

chastises, it is in mercy, and for correction. All the atonement that He requires, is a penitent spirit. But you represent a Being acting from personal motives, requiring satisfaction as the terms of pardon; a principle that leads to the most tremendous consequences: for however you may endeavour, by ingenious sophisms, to explain away its real character, it will be found, when put to the test of reason and common sense, to participate, in all its features, of the spirit of those expiatory sacrifices, which form one of the foulest blots in the history of human nature. The belief that atonement consists in the sacrifice, and not in the spirit of repentance with which it is presented, is subversive of every principle of religion and morality, and leads, as experience has woefully proved, to the most horrid excesses. Under the influence of this persuasion, that the efficacy was in proportion to the value of the sacrifice, man has been led on, step by step, to the very height of impiety; from the innocence of a primeval offering, to the immolation of human victims. The first tributes of man, were the vegetable productions of the earth. Next, animals, as holding a high rank in the scale of creation, were regarded as offerings of more value. As a consequence of this principle, and to procure more effectually the favour of their Deities, still nobler victims must be furnished, and the altar was stained with human blood. But in times of great disaster, the sacrifice of captives and of slaves was too mean an offering to propitiate the anger of heaven; a purer blood must flow; and hecatombs of children of noble and princely families were sacrificed to avert the impending danger. It was left for you to complete the system. You have advanced a step higher in the scale. You have sacrificed a Divinity.

LETTER IX.

HEBREWS, ix. 12.

You have sent me the Epistle to the Hebrews, with marginal references to certain chapters and verses, which I have no doubt you consider as your strong-hold, your citadel of defence, from which you may bid defiance to all attack. I, on the contrary, regard this as one of your weakest positions, for no where is the language so demonstrative of that figurative sense for which I contend. These chapters are little else than a continued allegory, or figurative comparison between the two Covenants, for the purpose of more strikingly exhibiting, by a juxtaposition of their analogous points, the typical and prophetic character of the one, and thereby demonstrating to the Jews, the truth, the superiority, and the sole obligation of the other. In this point of view, (and no other can well be taken of the Apostle's argument throughout,) all the texts to which you refer me, where redemption, &c. are united with blood, admit of a very easy and consistent solution; but in the sense of an atonement, are quite inexplicable. Let us take one of them on which you lay great stress, as, "*neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" These words are a plain allusion to the High Priest qualifying himself by blood, before his entrance into God's presence in the sanctuary, as the Redeemer of Israel. It is therefore evident, that the phrase, *by his blood he entered in*, relates in the first place to Christ himself, and therefore cannot possibly accord with your atonement; for if you make this the effect of his blood, you are necessarily constrained by the words to admit, that it was, as in the case of the High Priest, in the first place for

himself: no other interpretation can be given to them, for both they and the allegory have a direct primary reference to Christ. By his own blood *he*, not *we*, entered in, having obtained for us eternal redemption; that is, his blood was essential to the perfecting of himself before he could enter in as the Redeemer of others; if then it was an atonement for the latter, it was equally so for himself. The words, *his own blood*, cannot have an exclusive connection with the phrase, *having obtained eternal redemption*. If you could separate the term blood, and read, "he entered, having by his blood obtained eternal redemption for us," you would then with more propriety appeal to this text, though it would then be far from justifying your inference; and it is clear that if St. Paul had meant to convey this sense, he would in some such way have joined the terms blood and redemption; but in this case the allegory would not have been just, for the blood of the sacrifice before the High Priest's entrance into the sanctuary, was solely to qualify himself as a mediator.

If then this blood can neither be taken in the sense of an atonement, nor, in that of its prototype, the blood of the altar as a purifying from sin, in what sense is it to be taken? Why, certainly in that which St. Paul himself has given to it: "For it became him to make the captain of their salvation perfect;" (Heb. ii. 10.) By his faith and obedience unto death, that he might become worthy of the high exaltation to which he was raised. "Who for the sufferings of death was crowned with glory and honour;" (Heb. ii. 9.) *An eternal redemption*, that is, for these sufferings, he was empowered to grant, not as a mortal High Priest, a temporary, but an eternal remission of sins, (Col. i. 14. Eph. i. 7.) "And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," (Heb. v. 9.) "Wherefore, he is enabled to save them to the uttermost that come unto

God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them ;” (Heb. vii. 25.) “ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified ;” (Heb. x. 14.) This is the way in which, by his own blood, he hath effected our eternal redemption. In this view of the text, (which you see is perfectly conformable with the language of the same writer in the same Epistle,) see how the whole harmonizes; how complete the allegory, how perfect the type ! The High Priest having cleansed himself from his sins by blood, so as to present himself pure and undefiled before the Lord, was authorized to enter into the sanctuary, and afterwards to make propitiation for the sins of Israel : Christ having, by the shedding of his own blood, perfected himself, sat down at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary, as a *High Priest without spot or blemish*, to make propitiation for the sins of all mankind. The High Priest was the mediator for the people, who, having brought their offerings such as the law required, presented them to the Lord upon the altar, as an atonement for them ; by which, and his intercessions in their behalf, they became cleansed from their sins, and admitted to all the privileges of a member of the congregation. Christ is the mediator for all mankind ; that is, for all who bring unto him the offering which the new law requires, a faithful spirit ; and which he will alike present in our behalf, as effectual to the pardon of past sins, and to a participation in the benefits of a member of his congregation.

With any other interpretation than this, how can you reconcile the following words of the same writer ; “ Who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifices ; first for his own sins, and then for the people ; for this he did once, when he offered up himself ;” (Heb. vii. 27.) Will you say that the phrase, “ *for this he did once*,” refers only to the sins of the people ? But neither the construction of the sentence, nor the

type, nor the comparison he was maintaining, admits of it. You cannot read it, and not be convinced that St. Paul meant to shew, that what the blood of the altar did for the High Priest, Christ's blood did for himself, by qualifying each of them to appear in God's presence as mediators. The efficacy of Christ's sacrifice has as direct a reference to himself, as that of the altar to the High Priest. Now this would be impossible, if it was an atonement, as in this case its efficacy could have no relation but to others; but as the text refers to Christ, it follows, that if it was an atonement, it was for his own, as well as for the sins of the people. The plain sense of it is, that in order to qualify himself to appear in God's presence as our intercessor, it was not necessary, as an imperfect High Priest, to repeat the sacrifice, for that by the one shedding of his own blood, he had for ever perfected himself as the eternal Redeemer of all.

LETTER IX.

IN reading with attention the Epistles of St. Paul, you must frequently have remarked a leading idea running through a long course of his argument; a dominant sentiment governing and characterising it, with which the whole is associated, and with which every part must therefore accord. The context in these cases must decide the meaning of the text; for if this be at variance with it, we must necessarily have taken it in a wrong sense. The chapters we are now examining exhibit a remarkable proof of this. His great object was to shew the Jews, that the purification of the High Priest by blood, to enable him to act as a mediator, was figurative of the power with which Christ was invested,

through the merits of his own blood, as the mediator of the world. In explaining, therefore, the different passages in this Epistle, where the terms of the old ceremonial law are applied to Christ, we are not authorized to interpret them in any other sense, than that which he himself has affixed to them, as the completion of the corresponding type to which he particularly refers. The allegory necessarily confines the meaning within this limit. When, therefore, you interpret such passages as these; “He entered by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us:” “He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” when, I say, without considering the meaning which they must necessarily bear, as a part of the general argument, or as the illustration of a type, you interpret them in the sense of an atonement, that his blood and sacrifice were a satisfaction to Divine justice, you give to them a very opposite meaning to that which the Apostle meant to convey; viz., that it was for Christ himself that his blood and sacrifice were efficacious; that it was to qualify himself, before he could present others to be the object of God’s favour; that he might prove, before the stewardship was committed to him, that he was worthy in all things of the trust. The sense, therefore, which you give to these passages, is not only not that of the Apostle, but is quite inconsistent with it; inasmuch as this offering up, as typified by that of the High Priest, was for the perfecting of himself, as well as to enable him to put away the sins of others; and in no other sense than this can any of these phrases be taken. There is such a chain of connected argument throughout; all these passages are so indissolubly united, so dependent one on the other; they are all so interwoven with similar remarks and illustrations, that they cannot admit of any difference of interpretation: the sense of any one of them, clearly established, is that of them all. Take the book into

your own hands ; study the first ten chapters of this Epistle, and compare them with the following paraphrase, and see whether the version of those parts which relate to these disputed texts, is not justified by the authority of those passages to which it refers. As you particularly invited me to the consideration of this Epistle, you will see that I have perused it with attention ; and I hope with that freedom from prejudice, which becomes a lover of truth. The result of my examination is, that the whole language and reasoning throughout, are directly opposed to the inferences that you draw from them. There is no doubt, that if you have a predilection for dark and hidden meanings, you may find wherewith to satisfy it in the writings of St. Paul. Indeed, where is the language which ingenuity cannot pervert ? A celebrated French legalist asserted, that there was no sentence of five words in which he could not discover treason. But it is not our business to make out a case, but to try ingenuously to find out the author's meaning. Where a passage is susceptible of more than one sense, we are not to give to it an arbitrary interpretation ; but to compare it with corresponding passages, and see whether the author himself does not, in the course of his argument, explain his own meaning. This appears to me to be the easiest and surest way of arriving at the truth ; and therefore I have, as you will see by the references, founded the paraphrase of these chapters on the authority of other texts of a similar import, where the sense is fully stated ; and which, therefore, I regard as a datum ; an established truth ; a key to unlock the meaning of other parts where it is not so fully developed, and which deficiency I cannot therefore supply in any way, that does not perfectly accord with this previously admitted truth. It would be as tedious as it is unnecessary, to repeat on every occasion what has once been fully explained : a simple allusion suffices. If I

were to give a sum of money for services performed, and in afterwards alluding to this fact, I were simply to observe that I had distributed such a sum, this, as an unconnected remark, might be taken in two ways; as a gift, or a payment of a debt; but in consequence of the previous fact to which it refers, it can only be taken in the latter sense. So when the fact of Christ's having, by the once shedding of his blood, been for ever invested with the power of putting away the sins of all on repentance, is fully established, if I afterwards find this fact more concisely alluded to; as, "he hath put away sin by the one sacrifice of himself; through his blood we have redemption, that is, the forgiveness of sins;" I am not authorized to give to them an independent interpretation, but to receive them in the sense of that to which they refer. And I am in this case still more obliged to this, as I find that this peculiar phraseology is derived from those very ceremonies of the old law, which were typical of this redeeming power. For instance; "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.* He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" (Heb. x. 14, ix. 26.) These cursory allusions to the office of the High Priest are elsewhere more fully explained in their application to Christ; "and *being made perfect*", (that is, by *suffering*, the *suffering of death*,) "*he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. For the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honour, able to save them to the uttermost,*" (Heb. ii. 10. v. 9.) and elsewhere.

After an attentive perusal of these ten chapters, and the accompanying versions, you will see still more clearly the connection which necessarily exists between all these texts; that they all have one common meaning, from which you cannot depart without involving them in the greatest incon-

* That is, by faith.

sistency ; they are all parts of the main argument of this Epistle, to which he is continually recurring, viz., this perfecting of Christ's character by his death, and his being in consequence appointed our everlasting Redeemer : and he proves this to the Jews by a constant reference to the offices of the High Priest, as typical of this great truth. There is not a single passage in this Epistle, where the words blood, sacrifice, redemption, &c. occur, that is not more or less an illustration of this argument. The very words themselves indicate this allusion ; he entered *once* ; by *one* sacrifice ; perfected for *ever* ; an *eternal* redemption ; by his *own* blood. All these are terms of comparison between the two High Priests of the old and the new Covenant ; they are parts of the allegory which he sustains, and must be construed in an analogous sense.

The great object of St. Paul in this Epistle, was to exhort the Jews to remain firm in their Christian faith ; to afford them support and encouragement under their persecutions, by exposing to them the truth of the religion which they had embraced, and the certain realization of all those blessings which it promised them as the reward of their constancy ; and as, to them, the most persuasive and convincing of all proofs, he establishes this upon the evidence of their own prophecies, and that of the ordinances of their ceremonial law. This was an argument of far more weight with them than an appeal to the miracles of Christ, for they considered themselves so bound to their religion by the promises of God, and by threats of His vengeance if they forsook it ; by its injunction to put to death every prophet who should preach any other, though confirmed even by signs and wonders, that they were more disposed to attribute them to the instrumentality of inferior and evil spirits, than to admit them as indubitable proofs of Divine co-operation. This was,

therefore, the most effectual, and with many perhaps the only, means of over-coming their exclusive attachment to their religion: it was turning against them their own weapons; it was making their very prejudices subservient to their conviction; for the more they venerated the authority of their sacred writings, the more were they bound to admit the truth of that which rested upon this authority. Accordingly, we find this particular mode of argument so exclusively adhered to, that throughout the whole of this Epistle there is but one cursory allusion to the evidence of miracles; chap. ii. 4.

All these texts, therefore, are of an argumentative character, not doctrinal and dogmatic; in conformity with the special object of this Epistle, which was to shew the prophetic spirit of the ceremonial law; to prove to the Jews, as Jews, the truth of the new religion; to encourage them under their persecution.

The reasoning throughout is therefore of that character, called, *argumentum ad hominem*; drawn exclusively from their own books, from their inspired writers, from their history, from their written law, for the purpose of shewing how, in every respect, the new religion responded to all the prophecies and the types which these afforded; and especially that complete analogy between the blood of the altar, and that of Christ. But if St. Paul's object here was merely to expound to them that his blood was shed as a satisfaction to Divine justice; as an atonement for others, instead of a qualifying of himself; then, in this case, I do not see of what type it was the fulfilment, nor how it forms any part of the analogy. If all these allusions to his blood, and his putting away sin, were for the purpose of instructing them in this abstract dogma of faith, what proof was this to them of the truth of their religion? What argument for their continued confidence in it? Such an initiation into its mysteries might have been

very suitable and consistent in his address to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, where he declared that he had revealed to them the whole counsel of God; but to mix up an abstract doctrine of this kind in an exhortatory address to the faint-hearted, who were daily falling away from the truth, would have been altogether ill-timed and incongruous; foreign to the very object he had in view, which was not to instruct them in any particular article, but to shew them the grounds in general of their faith. These texts, therefore, are quite consistent, as referring to the accomplishment of a type; but quite irrelevant, as to the doctrine of a mystery.

LETTER X.

IN the first chapter is described the great excellence of the person of Christ, above Moses and all other Prophets, and by inheritance, even above the angels themselves; for having established by his precepts and his death the new law of faith, by which alone we are now purged from our sins, (3) he is seated at the right hand of God, with full power to execute it in our, and in the behalf of all men.* In the subsequent verses (6, 7, 14,) his superiority over the angels is again asserted, who were merely the temporary agents or messengers of God; but that to Christ (8 to 13), from the excellence and holiness of his character, He had committed an eternal dominion, having placed him at His own right hand, until sin, and death, and all his enemies should be subdued; (chap. ii. 1, 2, 5.) If, therefore, disobedience to the former, as those

* His having purged us from our sins, is our liberation from the bondage of the old law; our purification from all defilement; our pardon of all past offences through faith.

whom God had appointed in heaven as the executors of His will was justly punished, how much more was obedience due to him, whom God had not only announced (3, 4) by his prophets, but of whom he now bore witness by signs, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost; for of him it was (6, 7, 8,) that the Psalmist testified, saying "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour, and put all things under his feet;" which we see cannot, in its full extent, be applied to man, but is now fully accomplished in Jesus, who being as one of us, a little lower than the angels, we see truly crowned with glory and honour, and all things put in subjection to him, (9), as the reward of his meritorious sufferings and death; for (10) it was agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God, that he, by whose example many were to be turned to righteousness, should himself be made perfect by suffering, and to this end (11 to 17) he partook of the nature of man, that by his resurrection from the dead, he might free us from the bondage of sin and death, by giving us the certain assurance of a life beyond the grave. On every account, therefore, it was necessary that he should be like one of us (17), that he might not only shew himself faithful and obedient in every thing relating to God, but might become merciful in his intercessions for man; for (18) having himself suffered from temptation, he would be more willing and able to pity, and to succour others. Let us, therefore, (chap. iii and iv.) look to our present High Priest appointed by God himself, for he was, like Moses, faithful in all things; but he was greater than Moses, who was but the servant of God in the Jewish church, which was itself but a figure of that more perfect church, of which, under God, Christ is the founder and governor, and of which we are members if we continue firm in our faith, and do not fall off therefrom as our forefathers

in the wilderness, who entered not therefore into God's rest, the promised land ; but if we endure in our confidence unto the end, we shall be made partakers with Christ of the heavenly rest, of which your own Scriptures testify. For we have in him a High Priest, who, being tempted as we are, knoweth our infirmities, and will therefore be more mercifully disposed to us. We may now, therefore, with confidence appear in God's presence, and through his intercession find mercy, and support under all our afflictions. Now of this, (chap. v. 1, 2, 3,) our High Priest was but a shadow, for though it was his duty to offer up sacrifices for the sins of his brethren, and to have compassion on their ignorance and error ; yet, seeing that he was but himself frail and imperfect, he was obliged to offer up for his own, as well as for the sins of the people.* Nor did any (4, 5, 6,) take upon himself this high office, but such as were appointed by God of the line of Aaron ; but Christ did not glorify himself as a High Priest on this ground, but was solemnly ordained as such by God, according to the words of Scripture ; "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec ;" and again, "Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee ;" for God (7, 8, 9, 10,) heard his prayers and supplications, when, at the approach of a painful death, he expressed the same resignation, and entire devotion to his will in this, as in every other instance ; and having by this last and greatest trial shewn himself perfect in all things, he was appointed the eternal mediator for all men ; with power to pardon and to save all who obeyed his laws. Hold fast, therefore, (11th of this chapter, to the 22nd of chap. vii,) to the faith wherein you

* See ch. ix. 9. and v. 7 ; with which this is connected, and also ix. 12, where the analogy is completed by his own blood ; shed not for his sins, but to make him perfect, which the High Priest was supposed to become by his purification, holy and undefiled ; vid. also chap. vii. 27.

are, and be assured that all those promises which God confirmed even by an oath to Abram, shall be fulfilled to you, by your being made partakers of all those blessings reserved for you, and for all men in that heavenly sanctuary into which Christ has already entered, to receive all his faithful followers, being a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Now this Melchisedec was, (according to his name, and the name of Salem his country, which is king of righteousness, and king of peace,) a Priest as well as a Ruler, of whose birth and death, of whose beginning and ending, we have no account ; which is a figure of the eternal Priesthood of Christ : he was a devout worshipper of God, whom Abram himself acknowledges his superior, paying him tithes, and receiving from him his blessing. Now the law ordained that tithes were to be paid to the Priesthood of the tribe of Levi ; but Abram here paid tithes to a stranger ; and therefore the tribe of Levi, who were of his loins, may, as his descendants, in a manner be said to have paid tithes also to one acknowledged to be greater than any of their own Priesthood ; all of which is figurative of Christ, who also not being of the tribe of Levi, could not by the law appointed by God be made a Priest. The constant order of succession in the line of Aaron was therefore in Christ broken in upon, which sufficiently denotes also a change in the law ; for as Christ was more perfect than all other High Priests, so also was his new law better than the old ; and in him we have also a certainty of its continuance, for (chap. vii. 22, 23, 24,) he will not, like our mortal Priests, be succeeded by any other ; God having given to him an unchangeable Priesthood, and therefore through him, as an eternal intercessor, we are assured of complete salvation ; (25 to the end). It was, therefore, necessary that he to whom all power was thus committed of remitting our sin, should truly be holy, and undefiled, and perfect ; and

not as our High Priests, who are obliged to make repeated sacrifices for their own purification, and then for that of the people; but by one sacrifice of himself, he hath become for ever qualified to act as our mediator, and, as such, hath been consecrated for evermore by God himself.

CHAP. VIII.

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| <p>1. Now of these things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;</p> <p>2. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.</p> <p>3. For every High Priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.</p> <p>4. For if he were on earth, he should not be a Priest, seeing that there are Priests, that offer gifts according to the law:</p> | <p>1. The sum of what we have observed is this, that we have now such a High Priest in Christ.</p> <p>2. A Minister of the heavenly sanctuary, of whom</p> <p>3. Our High Priests are the example and shadow; and as these were ordained to make offerings and sacrifices, so it was therefore necessary that Christ also should offer up sacrifices.</p> <p>4. But his sacrifice, when on earth, was not, and could not have been according to the law, of the blood of goats and calves, but of his own blood; not of a carnal, but a spiritual nature; purifying not the outward flesh, but the heart and the conscience.*</p> |
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* See chap. ix, 9—16, where this argument is more fully detailed; also 22—24, chap. x, 11, 12.

5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.
6. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.
7. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah :
9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of
5. Of this sacrifice those of our Priests were but the types, as the tabernacle itself was but a copy, according to God's direction of that pattern which was shewn to Moses in the mount.
6. By this sacrifice he hath obtained also a far more excellent Priesthood, having been appointed the mediator of the new covenant, which promises far better things.*
7. For if not, there would have been no necessity for superseding the old.
8. But condemning the old, the Lord saith, I will make a new covenant with this people; I will give them a new religion, very different from that which I appointed them through my servant Moses.
- 9 Not of external forms and to ceremonies; but I will write
13. it in their minds, and in their hearts, and all shall understand it alike, both the unlearned and the wise, so that they shall no longer require a mediating Priesthood to instruct, to administer, and to intercede; but every one shall come before me

* Chap. ix. 15.

Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

himself, and worship me in spirit and in truth; for I will no longer remember their past sins and transgressions, but will shew my mercy to them in this new dispensation, which shall free them from the burden of the old, which will soon disappear for ever.

11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
13. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

CHAP. IX.

1. Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
2. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew bread; which is called the sanctuary.
3. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all:
4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant over-
- 1 For this covenant was only to an introduction to the new, as you see, not only from its ordinances, and the nature of the service it enjoined, but also from the construction of the building wherein they were performed, and particularly from the holy sanctuary, separated by a veil, into which none could enter, but the High Priest once a year, to make an atonement, first for his own, and then for the sins of the people.
6. you see, not only from its ordinances, and the nature of the service it enjoined, but also from the construction of the building wherein they were performed, and particularly from the holy sanctuary, separated by a veil, into which none could enter, but the High Priest once a year, to make an atonement, first for his own, and then for the sins of the people.

laid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.
6. Now when these things were thus ordained, the Priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.
7. But into the second went the High Priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people :
8. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all, was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing :
8. Now this veil concealing the sanctuary was a sign that the holiest of all, the heavenly sanctuary, was not yet known ; but at the death and resurrection of Christ, this veil was rent asunder, which was to shew that the holiest was then made manifest ; now this declared the inferiority of the old covenant.
9. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience ;
- 9, 10. All the services also which were enjoined by it were of a like imperfect nature, for they could do nothing towards making the conscience perfect.
10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.
11. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building ;
11. So that when Christ came to shew us the way into the heavenly sanctuary.

12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
12. It was not by the blood of animals, but by his own that he entered in, which shewed that the admission into this new sanctuary was not to be obtained by mere external purification, but by a thorough devotion of the heart to the divine will, which was shewn by this sacrifice of himself, and through the merits of which he has been placed at the right hand of God, as the everlasting mediator of all men, not like our High Priests, who are obliged to enter frequently into the sanctuary to effect temporary redemption; he hath by one entrance alone, for ever obtained the power of effecting the redemption, that is, the remission of the sins, of all us his faithful followers.*
13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh :
- 13, 14. Now all the sacrifices in the world could never procure this for you, or your entrance into this sanctuary. It is only by imitating this example of complete excellence to which Christ attained by his obedience to God; for this is now the service which he requires from us, by which our internal purification is effected, and not the observance of useless and unprofitable ceremonies, which can only purify the outward man, and which can never procure for us the pardon of our offences.
14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?
15. And for this cause he is the
15. It is to the blood of Christ

* 2, 23, 24, 15. Chap. ii. 9. Chap. v. 7, 9, 10. Chap. vii. 25, 27. Phil. ii. 8, 9. Col. i. 14. Eph. i. 7.

mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

to which we are indebted for this, through the merits of which he hath been appointed the mediator of this new covenant for all men; which hath been given us to supply the defects of the old, which could neither grant us the pardon of our offences,* nor any promise of that eternal reward, of which his resurrection from the dead has given us the positive assurance.

16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
17. For a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.
18. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.
19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people;
- 16, For as we cannot call any bequest our own, nor can be said to be in possession of it, until the death of the testator, so in like manner we had no surety of this inheritance before his death, and his resurrection to life.
18. As his blood, therefore, was necessary to give force and validity to this new testament, so the former one was ratified by blood also.
19. For Moses sprinkled with it, both the book of the law, and all the people;

* Gal. iv. 5.

20. Saying, This is the blood of the testament, which God hath enjoined unto you.
21. Moreover he sprinkled with blood, both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.
22. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission.
23. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the High Priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others;
26. For then must he often have
20. Saying, This is the blood of the covenant, which God hath enjoined unto you.
21. And he purified with it also the tabernacle, and all the vessels, and every thing which belonged to the law is purified with blood; nor can the people be cleansed from their defilements without it.
23. Now all this was necessary as figurative of what was to come: this purification by the blood of animals from outward defilements, by which the people were admitted into the tabernacle, and the High Priest into the holiest, was typical of that more precious blood.
24. By which our new High Priest hath prepared his entrance into the heavenly sanctuary; there to appear in the presence of God, as our everlasting intercessor.
25. And here there is a difference between the type and its accomplishment; for the High Priest made an annual sacrifice and purification by blood, to qualify himself to appear in God's presence in the holiest, to put away the sins of the people.
26. And as I told you before,*

* 12, 14, 15. Chap. ii. 9. Chap. v. 7, 9, 11. Chap. vii. 25, 27.

suffered since the foundation of the world : but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment :

28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Christ has by one sacrifice of himself, entered once for all into the holiest, and is empowered for ever as our intercessor, to put away all the sins of those *who come to God through him,** to grant eternal salvation *unto all them that obey him.*

27. And as all men are judged hereafter according to the merit of their actions in this life ;

28. So Christ, as the reward of all his patient sufferings for others, has been for ever appointed the supreme Lord and Governor over all his Church ; so that when he appears a second time, it shall be no more to suffer for sin, but to exercise this power in behalf of all his faithful disciples.

CHAP. X.

1. For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2. For then would they not have ceased to be offered ? because that the worshippers once purged should have

1. Now the old law being but the promise of these blessings to come, was quite inadequate of itself to procure them for us, for it could do nothing towards removing our moral offences.

2, For if so, if a final remission of them had been effected, there would have been no necessity to have made annual

* Chap. vii. 25. v. 9.

- had no more conscience of sins.
3. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.
 5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body† hast thou prepared me :
 6. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.
 7. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.
 8. Above when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein ; which are offered by the law ;
 9. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
 10. By the which will we are
- expiations for them ; nor need the old to have been superseded by the new law.*
4. But it was not possible that the blood of animals could take away sins pertaining to the conscience.
 - 5, 6. So that when Christ came into the world to establish this new law, he is represented by the Psalmist as condemning the insufficiency of the old, saying, “ In sacrifice and offering thou hadst no longer delight ; but a new religion hast thou established, of which thou hast appointed me the head and governor :
 - 7 I come, therefore, as thy minister to do thy will, O God.”
 9. By which words we are to understand, that he hath for ever abolished the old law of sacrifice, and established that of faith in its stead.
 10. By which we are now not only

* viii. 12.

† Psal. xl. Eph. i. 23. v. 30. Col. i. 24. ii. 17.

sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

free from all those defilements to which we were before subject under the old covenant; but we have moreover that which this was unable to effect for us; a remission of all past offences by Christ the High Priest of this second covenant, to whom through the merits of this last great sacrifice all power has been committed.

11. And every Priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

11. And this shews you his great superiority over all other High Priests, who, with all their continual offerings and sacrifices, were not enabled to put away sin.

12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God;

12. Whereas Christ by one sacrifice of himself, hath been exalted to the highest point of heavenly glory and power;

13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

13. Awaiting until his enemies, all idolatry, and false religion, and sin, and death, shall be put under his feet.

14. For by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

14. Thus through the merits of this one sacrifice, he will be enabled to put away the sins for ever of all those that are sanctified by faith, so as to render useless all farther offerings.

15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us, for after that he had said before,

15. And of this, as I shewed you before, the Divine Spirit has testified,

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. Eph. v. 26. 1 Cor. vi. 14. Heb. ix. 13.

16. This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ;
17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
18. And where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.
19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus,
20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.
21. And having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near in faith ; &c.
16. In saying that the law of this new covenant should be written on the hearts of men ;
17. And that to those who obeyed it, a full remission of all past sins should be granted.
18. Which must necessarily, therefore, render all farther sacrifice superfluous.
- 19 Having therefore a High Priest who, by his own blood,
22. hath consecrated the way in to the heavenly sanctuary, not for himself alone, but for all mankind, and where, instead of death, they will meet with eternal life, let us boldly enter in.

LETTER XI.

You may have remarked, in reading this Epistle, (1,) that the great object of St. Paul therein was not, as in other of his writings, to expound and enforce the moral of the new religion, but to strengthen the confidence of his countrymen in their faith, by a series of arguments the best calculated to produce an influence upon their minds. "Wherefore, leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on to perfection," (chap. vi. 1,) by which he means, instruction in other

doctrines, which were not so apparent as the *principles*, but which were necessary to be understood, to arrive at a *perfect* knowledge of the new dispensation ; such as the nature of its connection with the old ; the analogy between the two Priesthoods ; the typical character of the ceremonial law, and its accomplishment in Christ. These he calls strong meat, in opposition to the milk, or first principles ; such as faith, repentance, the judgment to come, the moral principles of the law. These, he says, he leaves. From this, and from all his argument, it is clear, (2,) that St. Paul's great object was to confirm the wavering faith of his countrymen, by shewing them, that under the new covenant they would find the realization of all those blessings, which were figuratively announced to them under the old. In the long comparison which he has instituted between them, the part on which he lays the greatest stress, and to which he is constantly recurring, is this purification of the High Priest by blood, as a type of the perfecting of Christ by his own blood, by which they were severally qualified to act as mediators.

It is now my present object to shew you, the connection of all these passages to which you draw my attention, with this great point of his argument ; and if I can prove to you, that they have more or less a relation thereto, and must consequently be taken in a corresponding sense, you can no longer refer to them in support of your hypothesis, inasmuch as it is evident from the argument of St. Paul, that the redeeming power with which, in all these texts, his blood, his sacrifice, his sufferings are associated, was, as I say, the reward of this sacrifice, &c. ; and not, as you say, the price at which it was purchased. With respect, therefore, to their taking away of sin, neither the blood of the sacrifice, nor that of Christ, served to any other end than the qualifying them to act as mediators ; for as far as it had a personal reference to

the High Priest, it was strictly a purification, or rendering perfect; and the apostle speaks of Christ's blood in the same terms; (chap. vii. 26, 27.) "*For we have need of such a High Priest, holy and undefiled, who has no necessity to make himself so by repeated sacrifices, having for ever become so by his one sacrifice.*" He says again, that the pure and undefiled state of the High Priest through blood, was the pattern of that better sacrifice, by which Christ was perfected to appear in heaven in God's presence for us. Can language be more clear and explicit; any comparison more strict and literal? Can there, after this, be a doubt that St. Paul meant to shew that the shedding of Christ's blood had fulfilled this type of the law, by rendering him perfect, and *thereby* qualifying him to be the mediator of the new covenant, with power to put away sin? To attribute to it a further efficacy, would not only be going beyond that to which he has strictly limited it by his frequent and precise definitions, but would be quite inconsistent with that perfect analogy, which he has established between the type and its accomplishment. In fact, the cause of the connection of Christ's blood with his redeeming power, is so clearly stated by St. Paul, that it is surprising how there can be two opinions about it. I regard it as an indisputable dogma, and cannot conceive on what ground you can reject what is so clearly established. And if you do not reject it, how can you interpret other passages in a sense contrary to that which you here admit to be true. You cannot be justified in opposing the uncertain to the certain, much less in admitting the former and rejecting the latter.

Let us again, according to this principle, examine the important text, which you have marked; (chap. ix. 12.) "*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*"

If you had no prepossessions, you could not but perceive

that the above is but a repetition, in other words, of what he had more fully and literally explained in the passages to which I have directed your attention. "By his own blood he entered into the Holy Place;" that is, "for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour;" (chap. ii. 9.) "And being made perfect," (that is, by death; see preceding verse,) "he was called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec;" (see also chap. ii. 7., chap. i. 9.) Having obtained eternal redemption, (i. e. forgiveness of sins,) (Col. i. 14.; Eph. i. 7.;) for us; that is, (chap. v. 9.) "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Chap. vii. 25.) "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

But without insisting upon the connection which must necessarily subsist between all these and similar passages of the same Epistle, the verses which immediately precede and follow this so qualify its sense, that it can admit of no other possible construction; for he says, from (v. 7 to v. 10,) that all washings, and sacrifices, and offerings of blood, might do very well to qualify the High Priest to enter into the *earthly* sanctuary, but could do nothing towards perfecting him as to the conscience. So that, when Christ came (v. 11.) as the High Priest of an *heavenly* sanctuary, it was not by the blood of animals, but by his own blood, that he perfected himself before he entered in; and by which he was also empowered to grant, not a temporary, but an eternal remission of all the past sins of his faithful followers. The verses following are in the same sense; (13) that if the blood of animals can cleanse from outward defilements, (14) how much more effective should be the blood of Christ towards your internal purification. (15) For it was for having shed his blood that he has since been appointed the High Priest of this new covenant,

with power to grant to his faithful followers, preparatory to their reception into his new sanctuary, a full remission of all those past sins, which the High Priest under the old law could not do. It is not by isolating a passage, and interpreting it according to the strictness of the letter, that we can have its true sense ; we must take the context with the text ; we must trace the association in the mind of the author ; we must follow the chain of his argument ; and if we find it linked together in one indissoluble sense, that is the sense which we must give to the whole and to every part of it, or we shall never attain unto his true meaning.*

Now let us examine this text in another point of view ; let us analyze it into its component parts, and let us give to each term the sense in which the author has himself defined it : for to affix to any sentence, or any word, a meaning other than that in which he himself has explained it, would be opposed to all fair and honest enquiry. I cannot therefore, as you, receive the word *redemption* in its ordinary acceptance, as a ransom, or a payment of a penalty, when I find that St. Paul has more than once expressly defined the sense

* In support of this dogma of the Atonement, as well as of that of the Trinity, you reconcile with equal facility the most evident inconsistencies. You cannot but say, with St. Paul, that the power of putting away sin was the reward of his sufferings ; and yet, you construe other verses in a sense quite opposed to this admission, that it was bought at the price of his sufferings ; as if that which is bought at a price, and that which is bestowed as a recompense, were the same thing ; as if a reward, and the payment of debt, were synonymous. That for which I have paid the full price, I claim as a right, and cannot receive as a reward. A reward is a voluntary acknowledgment of services voluntarily performed ; but a contract is a mutual obligation. A reward is a gift ; and therefore I cannot be rewarded with what is my own ; and that is my own which I have purchased. It is, therefore, the greatest inconsistency to say, that that was bestowed as a reward for which a stipulated price was paid, and which never would have been bestowed but for this price.

in which he uses it. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" (Col. i. 14.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins;" (Eph. i. 7.; see also Rom. iii. 24.) I am obliged, therefore, to understand by our eternal redemption, a final remission of sins, or, as he says elsewhere, "Our being sanctified for ever; our being perfected;" (chap. x. 14); in contrasting it with the repeated purifications of the ceremonial law, (v. 10 to 14.) Again, I enquire the meaning of the word *us*; to whom, and on what terms, is this remission granted? I find it, by the same writer, limited to the obedient to his laws; "to all who come unto God by him; to all them that obey him;" (also, Heb. vii. 25., chap. x. 14.) Again, I refer to the same authority to know, in what way his blood was efficacious to his power of saving; and I find the answer in the same plain terms, as the reward of the perfection to which he had attained by this last proof of his obedience; (chap. i. 9., ii. 9., v. 7, 8, 9., ix. 15, 27, 28., vii. 27.; Phil. ii. 8, 9.; Col. i. 14.) The word *once*, has also a very significative meaning, and perfectly explains the degree and the nature of the efficacy which is here attributed to Christ's blood; for St. Paul says, by one shedding of it he was perfected for ever as an eternal mediator; but that the High Priest was obliged to qualify himself by blood, for every exercise of his mediatorial power on his entrance into the Holiest. I am now, therefore, enabled by the writer himself, to affix to this text the precise sense which he meant to convey; that through the merits of his voluntary shedding of his blood once for all, he is for ever placed at the right hand of God, with power to grant to his faithful disciples a final remission of their past sins.

When you ask me, therefore, for my authority for the interpretation of these passages, I refer you to corresponding

passages explanatory not only of their general sense, but of each particular term. It is not mine, but the author's own explanation, from which I cannot depart without a wilful perversion of his meaning, and a flagrant violation of all the rules of sound criticism. If I ask you, in return, your authority for your doctrine of the atonement, you refer me in reply to this very verse, and to others of a similar import, all of which are in fact nothing more than a repetition of the same thing, in somewhat different language; for instance, "And without shedding of blood is no remission;" (chap. ix. v. 22, 23.) It was, therefore, necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

In the preceding verses (22, 23) he observes that the blood of animals served to purify what belonged to the ceremonial law, to remove external defilements; but *that heavenly things were to be purified by better sacrifices than these*. This better sacrifice was that of his own blood; and for what was this efficacious? He tells you in the next verse; to qualify him to enter as our Intercessor, not as the High Priest into the earthly, but into the heavenly sanctuary, of which he says the former was but the figure. How perfectly does this accord with the explanation which has been given of the 12th verse of this chapter, on which you lay so much stress. And here he points out a difference in the analogy, for he says the High Priest (25) was obliged to make an annual purification, to enable him to put away the sins of Israel; but that Christ by his blood was perfected for ever as a mediator; or, as he expresses it in the next verse (26), to put away sin by this *one* sacrifice of himself. The analogy is closely pursued in these verses, in order to shew what he here asserts, that the temple, and the services therein, were but the figure of what was to come (24), the pattern of heavenly things (23). So

in verse 24, he remarks, that Christ entered into the heaven itself in the presence of God for us; it was in the Holiest, between the wings of the cherubim, that God was supposed especially to dwell; so that the High Priest was said to be in His immediate presence, when he interceded for Israel. In like manner, Christ is said to be in the presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary *for us*; that is, as an intercessor, to put away the past sins of all *who obey him*. It is surprising that language so clear, a meaning so palpable, should be liable to misconstruction. If farther confirmation of it were wanting, it is furnished by the two next verses, where it is said, that the judgment passed upon him for the part he had acted here, was to invest him with the power to reward all his faithful followers.

The concluding verses of the chapter are of the same import with this which we have examined (12), as this is also but a repetition of prior statements, all linked together in one continuous argument, shewing throughout the nature of the connection between Christ's blood and our salvation.

The tenth chapter is a continuation of the same reasoning, that all the ceremonies of the law were ineffectual towards purging the conscience, (1—4); that God therefore sent Christ into the world to establish a new covenant, whose laws were to be written in the hearts of men, by an obedience to which we should become sanctified,* (v. 10); that *through the offering of Jesus Christ once for all, we might be perfected for ever*, by a final remission of our sins, (14—17.) Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin, (18.) We, therefore, under

* *By the which will we are sanctified*; that is, by the second covenant; for the description which he here gives of that which God wills, can only refer to it. If the word *will* here meant what you say, the sacrifice of Christ, the whole tenth verse would be a senseless and unmeaning tautology: By the which offering we are sanctified through the offering, &c.

the protection of our new High Priest, may boldly enter into this new sanctuary, into which, through the merits of his blood, he is enabled to admit all his faithful followers.

LETTER XII.

Now throughout the whole of these first ten chapters, there is such an unbroken continuity of argument, elucidated by passages so clear and precise, that it is impossible for language to be more conclusive with respect to the way in which Christ's blood is described as efficacious towards our salvation. But what is there in all this about God's wounded justice? Where, that salvation depended upon this sacrifice? It is said that through the merits of it he is appointed the Judge and Saviour of the world; but not that without this sacrifice it would have been utterly excluded from grace. Such an inference is a notorious misrepresentation of the language, which merely states that his blood is the cause of his saving power; a truth that I am equally ready with yourselves to acknowledge; for the way in which by his death he is become the author of salvation, is so clearly and so frequently explained by St. Paul, that to infer from it that all, even the just, without his death would have perished, amounts almost to a wilful perversion of his language; which affirms nothing more than that through the merits of his death he is appointed their Judge, and to whom, as the reward of their faith, he will shew mercy; but to conclude that had not Christ been the appointed medium, this mercy would have been withheld, is a most unwarrantable deduction, and directly opposed to the express declaration of our Saviour himself, that he came not to save the whole, for that they had no need of a physician.

How can you reconcile these words with God's abandonment of all alike? Would he have asserted, and his inspired followers after him, (Heb. x. 26., ix. 26.; Mark ii. 17.; Luke v. 31, 32.; 1 Tim. i. 15,) that it was sinners *only* that he came to save, when it was alike his object to save the just. After this declaration, can you continue to assert that all these redemptions, accorded to faith, were the effect of an atonement? Can anything be a more signal refutation of a doctrine, which declares that it was efficacious for those who, Christ asserts, required it not; which declares that they were the objects of God's condemnation, who, he says, were safe in His mercy? Do you think to foist such unscriptural and irrational notions upon the New Testament, without creating difficulties at every point? If I were to follow up the consequences of this doctrine, there is not a page of the volume with which it would not come into collision; but a single instance, like the present, which is so notoriously at variance with it, ought to be sufficient to induce you, as conscientious enquirers, to abandon it for ever. What! you unreservedly assert that Christ's mission was for the salvation of all, just and unjust alike, when he himself says that he came *only* for the latter, for that the former had no need of him. When he declares that it had only a special reference, you assert that it was of universal application, and you maintain that you have Scripture authority in direct contradiction to the words of the Divine Founder of your religion. How can you reconcile this palpable contradiction upon a fundamental point of your faith? If you cannot, you have no alternative but to renounce it, with all those other mysterious and enigmatical dogmas with which you have interwoven it; for they must all stand or fall together: and in lieu thereof, to adopt the consistent and rational doctrine which the words of our Saviour imply, and which is confirmed by his Apostles,

that he came to turn sinners unto righteousness ; an ignorant and sinful world, to the knowledge and practice of virtue and true religion, as the only means of its salvation ; that having faithfully executed the task even unto death, he was rewarded by being appointed its arbiter to judge it in mercy, and that this is the way in which we are to be justified by his blood, to be saved by his life ; that it is on account of the merits of this sacrifice, that salvation is to come through him :—not that without it the just would have been deprived of their due meed of reward, but simply that he was to be the dispensator of it.

We have salvation in Christ by obedience to his laws, which are those of eternal truth, by which alone all can be saved and will be saved, of every faith, of every age, and of every nation. God is no respecter of persons, but in every “nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him ;”* (Acts x. 34, 35.) He is now the propitiation of our sins, because he has assured us of the terms on which, under the new covenant, he is empowered to grant a remission of them, not of sacrifice, but of faith ; not of outward, but of internal purity. Of all this, I find the repeated assurances in plain and intelligible language, but no

* This is a great and glorious truth, announced by St. Peter, and confirmed by St. Paul ; (Rom. ii. 26, 29,) that the just of all ages, and all nations, shall be accepted with God. Setting aside for a moment all other considerations, do not your hearts respond to this declaration ? Is it not in unison with all its best and kindest feelings ? If you are forced, by the language of Revelation, to believe the contrary, is there not an unwillingness, a certain secret feeling of regret, a sacrifice of all your natural sympathies to that obedience, which you acknowledge as your first duty, to the authority of holy writ, and would you not with more pleasure, if it had been so enjoined, have coincided with the doctrine of the universal recompense of the just under every circumstance ? Is not this more agreeable to all your preconceived notions of the Divine justice and goodness ? And why is it so ? Why this jarring of all your

where what imposes upon me the belief, that salvation was the consequence of his sacrifice, as a sacrifice to appease an irritated Deity.

I cannot, therefore, from inuendoes and far-fetched inferences, admit a doctrine, between which and the language of this Epistle there is no possible reconciliation. For if you have read it with any degree of candour and attention, you must concede, that St. Paul speaks of his death as the perfecting of his character, and as his title to his mediatorial power. But the admission of this is the entire condemnation of your doctrine; for how is it possible, according to you, that either his entrance into heaven, or his mediatorship, could be dependant upon His blood who was perfect; to whose merit nothing could add; whose blood, you say, was necessary to prepare the way for others, but not for himself? Yet you see, on the contrary, St. Paul expressly states, that it was necessary first for his own entrance, before he could act as the Redeemer of others. And yet you continue to refer to passages of this description in proof of your atonement, which are palpably inconsistent with, and offer a flat contradiction to, the very foundation of your dogma, the sacrifice of a perfect Being. For if it was necessary by his blood to prove him to be faithful in all things, before he was received into God's immediate presence as His vice-gerent, where was the perfect sacrifice? For how could that offering be perfect, which was only made

benevolent feelings, and your reason with your faith? Why this irreconcilableness of all your best notions of the Divine attributes with the doctrine of holy writ? Why, it is yourselves alone who are the cause of this. It is your perversion of the sacred text; the false doctrines you have engrafted upon it; your misrepresentations of its true spirit and character; your departure from the simplicity, the purity, and rationality of its doctrines: it is your tremendous dogma of the atonement, and all its consequences; your narrow and exclusive application of the efficacy of faith.

so by sacrifice? Where, then, was that infinite merit which enabled him to take upon himself the sins of others, when he required to be tried himself? The High Priest was previously made perfect, pure, and holy, before he remitted the sins of others; but Christ, by one and the same sacrifice, according to the Apostle, perfected himself, and according to you, took away the sins of the world. This destroys all the analogy, so frequently insisted upon in this Epistle. No two statements can be more opposite than your's and the Apostle's. In the one, the cause is put for the effect; in the other, the effect for the cause. St. Paul says, that it was necessary he should be made perfect through suffering; you, that he suffered because he was perfect: being perfect, his death was the salvation of the world; whereas the Scriptures say, he became the author of salvation, because he was made perfect by his death. It was not his death, but his willingness to submit to it. For how could his death be an atonement, when this power of taking away sin was expressly conferred upon him, not as a right and a just claim which he had acquired thereby, but in testimony of his obedience, "because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity." His mediatorship was the reward, not the price, of his blood. It was a gift, and not the fulfilment of a contract; a trust confided to him, from his having proved himself worthy of it, not the payment of a debt. All this necessarily follows from what St. Paul has written; and as impossible as it is to reconcile your interpretation of these texts with the general language and argument of this Epistle, as simple, natural, and consistent is St. Paul's own explanation of them. But if they stood alone, if there were no accompanying explanation, if there was no type to refer to, still it would be impossible for me to admit them in the sense that you do. My confidence in the moral attributes of the Deity; in all His more amiable

qualities ; all the best feelings of my own nature ; my inward conscience,—that instinctive sense of what is just and unjust ; the innate propensities of the heart to whatever is amiable, and kind, and good ; all unite in rejecting such a belief. That God could, in the ordinary sense of the term, accept the death of Christ as a sacrifice ; that it could be to Him, as St. Paul says, a sweet-smelling fragrance, otherwise than as a means to good, as an act of obedience for the purpose of accomplishing the great end of his mission ; that for the vindication of His attributes, the reparation of the wrong they had received, He could view with complacency the sufferings of innocence ; nay, the more of innocence and goodness, the more acceptable the sacrifice ; why, God forgive me if I err ! but in all the records of cruelty and crime, in all the frightful exhibitions of Pagan rites, in all the ferocious excesses of superstition and fanaticism, I know nothing that can be placed beside it. The sacrifice of prisoners of war, was in part the consequence of those vindictive feelings which a state of hostility creates, and diminishes somewhat from the disgust which its religious character inspires. The offering up by the Carthaginians of their own children, all horrid as it was, was dictated by a persuasion that they were shewing respect and honour to their Gods, by a sacrifice of that which was the most dear to them ;—the bloody persecutions of heresy, were in part from the feeling that they were rendering God service in promoting the interest of true religion : but, in your case, there are no qualifying motives, there are no extenuating circumstances. It was simply a sacrifice required by God as a reparation of the offence He had received ; and the more pure, holy, and innocent the victim, the more complete and acceptable the offering. Talk not then of this, with the sacred writers, as an act of the *grace* of God, as a *free-gift*, as a manifestation of His great

love for the world. You have no pretensions to this language. If God could not except even the just from the condemnation which He had passed on all, but at the price of Christ's blood, then to pay this debt Christ died. Collateral benefits might result from it, but the great and primary object was to satisfy an offended Deity; and the greater and more important these benefits, the more was it a proof that they were not the cause of the sacrifice, inasmuch as they were all set aside, and would have been for ever disregarded, if justice had not been previously satisfied. If not, if these benefits were the cause of his death, then it partook no longer of the nature of a sacrifice; it changed altogether its character; it referred to man, and not to God, and was a demonstration of His regard for the world, and not for the vindication of His attributes; it was the means to a good, no doubt the best, perhaps the only one. If this can be called a sacrifice, then every thing in life is a sacrifice; for the apparent constitution of the world, the economy of the whole system around us, is the eduction of good from evil; all suffering of mind and body, all subdued desires, privations of every kind, persecution, death in every righteous cause, all partake of the nature of Christ's sacrifice; for all this evil is not for the gratification of the Being that inflicts it, but as the means of eventual good; and in this sense St. Paul applies it to Christ, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In speaking also of the characteristics of the new religion, brotherly love, charity, kindness, he calls them, in the language of the old law, "the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God;" (Phil. iv. 18.); and again, "to do good and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased;" (Heb. xiii. 16.) Here you cannot misinterpret the words; you are under the necessity of admitting their figurative sense, and yet, they are not

more so than when he speaks in the same terms of the death of Christ; for if he could apply them to the moral and spiritual character of the new law, between which and the old sacrifices no analogy existed, how much more would he be led to make use of them in reference to the death of Christ, where an evident analogy existed, and which it was his special object to point out. From God's love of the world, He sent Christ into it to afford it the means of becoming reconciled to Him; and as obedience to the laws which he taught us, is here said by the apostle to be a sacrifice well pleasing to God, so on the part of Christ also, this same obedience rendered both his life and his death alike an acceptable sacrifice; and in this sense it is in which St. Paul applies these quotations. We view with pride and exultation the death of every illustrious martyr; not that we revert to it with any gratification, otherwise than in connection with its moral character and effects: so the death of Christ of itself could be no satisfaction to God, independently of his willingness to submit to it in furtherance of the great cause to which it was subservient. And it is impossible that this, or any other partial evil, can ever be acceptable in any other sense than this. Nor can I see how his death simply could otherwise put away sin, but through its moral effects. If the anger of God had before been justly excited against man, this additional crime of putting to death His messenger, the Saviour of the world, would have added to the sum of his offences; and, consistently with that spirit which had already condemned him, would have justified an aggravation of his punishment. But no; this transcendent crime, which completed his iniquities, which filled up the measure of his offences, was his pardon and absolution. Strange way of expiating offences, by adding to their amount; of deprecating punishment, by plunging still farther into guilt!

LETTER XIII.

ST. PAUL, in this Epistle, speaks of three great objects as attained by the death of Christ. The perfecting of himself; the influence of his example, (xii. 2—4); and the confirmation of the truth of his mission. Of all these, specially mentioned, not one partakes in the slightest degree of that which you assign as the object. So far from being of a personal, they are all of an external and benevolent nature; and as such, were they not sufficient to justify the death of Christ? Were not these ends worthy of the means? No; according to you, this signal proof of God's love for the world, this bright example of patient suffering and devotion to the Divine will, of inflexible adherence to duty, of the sacrifice of all power, and of greatness, and of life itself, which was to serve as a pattern to all men, in all future ages; this glorious proof of the truth of our religion, and of the realization of all its blessings; the encouragement which it affords to a steadfast continuance in faith, under all difficulties and dangers; all these great motives and objects are not enough; other causes for his death must be found, quite foreign to these here stated by the Apostle, and which have no support but your own arbitrary interpretations of Scripture; and after all, the very language which you quote, and the inferences which you draw from it, are quite at variance with the true nature of your doctrine; for when properly explained, there exists between them the most palpable inconsistency. The language is everywhere, the pardon of sin. "His blood cleanseth from all sin; he is the propitiation for the sins of all men;" and in conformity with this you say, that his death was an atonement for sin; but in reality, according to your own history of the transaction, it had nothing to do with sin. If

I may use an incongruous phrase, but which is characteristic of your statement, he died not for the pardon of sin, but of merit; that it might be exempted from the punishment of guilt; that salvation might be extended to the just of all ages; for sin, you allow, was and ever will be the object of God's aversion and punishment. He, therefore, died not to purchase the pardon of sin, but the reward of merit; not to satisfy justice, but to prevent injustice, the condemnation of the innocent with the guilty, far greater than to have left sin unpunished. I am punished because the sin of others abounds. Why, my virtue is only the more conspicuous; like a bright spot upon a dark ground, it shines with the greater lustre; the more universal the depravity around me, the more my individual merit; I am the more worthy for my resistance to the seduction of example, for bearing up against the torrent that has swept all before it; my reward should be proportioned to the difficulties of my situation, to the rudeness of my trial, to the energies of my virtue. But no; that which gives me a superior claim to reward, is the very cause of my condemnation! And this is what you call justice, for which Christ died. Certainly, the nature of the satisfaction corresponded with the quality of the justice. The one condemned the innocent to suffer with, the other for, the guilty. And can you really reconcile to yourselves such principles? Can you, with the volume of Nature before you, and the New Testament in your hands, bring yourselves to believe that such is the spirit of religion; that such is the doctrine of Christianity? Can any one, endowed with intelligence, seriously and soberly admit such a system? And must we descend to argue, in order to expose its deformity? Should not its very hideousness carry with it its own refutation? It is not only God's attribute of justice which is outraged, but His wisdom, His goodness, His mercy. It destroys all

confidence in the moral laws of His government; for if justice can acquit to-day, what yesterday it condemned; if it now rewards, what it formerly deemed worthy of punishment; if the eternal principles of right and wrong can thus vary with times and seasons; if God's everlasting purposes can thus change with circumstances, to what can we trust? And yet to this doctrine you cling as your hope and consolation, destructive as it is of all hope and faith; for if we cannot confide in the immutability of His laws, then the blood of the everlasting covenant is no longer our surety. But no, do not deceive yourselves; every rational, moral, and religious principle compels us to the belief that this blood was shed for far other ends, and from far other motives, than that which you assign; and the language of revelation is too explicit, too frequently repeated, too emphatically declaratory of the benevolent character of Christ's mission and death, to leave us in doubt; for it is not announced in equivocal or figurative phraseology, but in clear and intelligible terms that cannot be mistaken. When I see it thus stated in passages such as 1 John iv. 9—11, and elsewhere, is it upon the authority of doubtful texts, to say the most, that you presume to substitute other motives for his death, than the one so positively assigned by the Apostle? And is it not every where the same; is not a similar testimony to the Divine motive borne by the other sacred writers; the good of man, from the love He bore him? According to you, the greater was man's wickedness, the more did justice demand Christ's death; but on the contrary, the Apostle says, the more sin abounded, the more did God's *grace* abound, the more was His love manifested in the death of Christ. "Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us." The world was totally estranged from Him, but His mercy and goodness were still extended to it; and this was "made manifest in the death of

Christ. Not a word is there here about *justice* ; the motive was pity for lost and erring man, and the object to reclaim him. And so it is wherever the Divine motives are *directly* announced. I do not know any truth, unless it be that of salvation by faith, which is more strongly asserted, than that the motive of the Deity in the mission of Christ was a pure and unmixed feeling of love. There is a concord of sentiment and language in this annunciation which impels us to receive it as the truth ; for if there were other feelings than these which entered the Divine mind, how could all the writers with one accord refer to love alone ? Was not this in part a *concealment* of the truth ; and if the motive concealed was of an opposite nature to the one avowed, was it not a *perversion* of the truth ? And again, if this important communication was to have been made to us, would it not have been so, where it was the very subject in question ; where the occasion especially called for it ; where the truth required it ; instead of being obliged to seek it in obscure allusions and inuendoes, and in mysterious interpretations of texts, admitting a far more simple and consistent explanation ? In the following verses ; “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him ;” (1 John iv. 9, 10). “ Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ;” or, as in v. 14, “ that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Here the motive is plainly and distinctly avowed : if other than this was in the Divine mind, why is it not here stated ? Why this want of explicitness on a point which, as touching our salvation, required the fullest illustration ? Why is not the *whole* truth stated here, by an explanation of the way in which, according to you, he was the propitiation, or Saviour of the world ? For

myself, taking the term propitiation in the sense in which St. Paul, (Rom. iii. 25,) and St. John, (1 John i. 9., ii. 2,) have explained it, I have no difficulty in reconciling it with the principle here so exclusively avowed; but in your sense the Apostle would be quite inconsistent, in speaking of this transaction as a manifestation of *God's* love;—of Christ's, if you will. If justice exacts the uttermost farthing before I release my debtor, can I say that his liberty is owing to my love for him? Would not such a statement be false, and should not I attribute to myself a motive which belonged to him alone who paid the debt? The prisoner shall not be released, the world shall not be saved, until the debt be paid: and this liberty and this salvation you call an act of *grace* and of *love*. You have before confounded all principles of justice, and you would now alike confound our notions of love and mercy. If words have any meaning, the love was in him who paid the debt, and in him who exacted it the justice. This inference is indisputable from your own statement. Justice had condemned the world, and until its claims were satisfied, no pardon could be extended to it. Love neither averted the sentence, nor mitigated its severity. The whole debt, the sacrifice of Christ, was demanded by, and paid to, justice. The reason assigned, therefore, by the Apostle is, neither in whole, nor in part, the truth. It is impossible in itself. I may be compelled to an act by two concurring, but never by two opposing motives. Love and justice may both invite me to discharge a debt; but if the debt be owing to me, it is not possible that these two motives can concur; for if I exact it, it is justice, not love; if I renounce it, it is love, not justice. Your doctrine, therefore, can never harmonize with the language of Scripture. But if, on the contrary, what it asserts be true, that love, and love alone, dictated the mission of Christ, then “where sin

abounded, grace did much more abound;" and why not? If it pleased God to redeem the world from its lost state, by an especial interposition of His love, what was to prevent it? What is this strange language that you hold; what are these demands of justice which His love could not supersede; what is this new and mysterious power of which you speak? This external independent force, irresistibly compelling the Deity? This imaginary creation of some abstract essence, by which Omnipotence is controlled? Is He not also a God of infinite goodness and mercy? Or are these qualities subordinate, and limited in their operation; while stern justice reigns paramount over all, subjecting His other Divine perfections to its inexorable dictates? Well then, if, unhappily, rigid justice is to be executed, let it be executed on sinful man; but to call that justice which visits the innocent with the punishment of guilt, is a monstrous perversion of terms; a profanation of the name; an insult to reason and common sense; repugnant to all the doctrines and spirit of revelation, and an outrage on all the Divine attributes.

LETTER XIV.

ROMANS, v. 8, 9, 10.

"But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

ST. PAUL is here remonstrating with the Jewish Christians on their unreasonableness, in imposing upon the new converts the burden of the old law. With this view, no language could be so forcible or appropriate, as the application to Christ of

the terms of its ceremonies, to shew that they were but the promise of better things, which had been accomplished in him. In him the law was completed. As its representative, its language is transferred to him. When St. Paul says, we are the *truly circumcised who rejoice in Christ*, you admit the figurative sense, and yet you refuse it to this phrase, *justified by his blood*, although a far more easy and natural figure, on account of the direct antithesis to the blood of the altar; and in despite also of the argument which he is maintaining, and with which this phrase is connected, that justification is wholly and solely by faith. To shew this was the great object of this Epistle, and yet here in direct opposition to all his argument, he attributes it to blood; thus by one word negating all that he had been labouring to establish throughout these first five chapters, and which he continues to enforce unto the end. It is impossible to suppose that any such contradiction can exist. The justification which he says was by blood, is precisely the same as that which he had just asserted to be the consequence of faith: but, literally, this could not be; that of which I am already in possession through blood, I cannot receive a second time through faith. To obviate this, you say that the justification by the former was only the *means* of obtaining it through the latter. But on the contrary, St. Paul expressly ascribes, equally to it as to faith, the *end* itself, viz., pardon of sin, and salvation as the result. Now he could not maintain that which was in itself absurd and impossible; and it is equally clear, that that which was, and which could not be other than the effect of faith, would not by him be ascribed to blood. It follows, therefore, of necessity, that this term must be used in a figurative sense, either for *faith in his blood*, which he had a little before asserted to be the cause of justification, (iii. 25), or to shew the superior efficacy of Christ's justifying power through his

own blood, over that of the High Priests through the blood of animals.* In this sense it becomes almost literal; and it is probable that this is its true meaning, for the words "*saved from wrath through him,*" and in the next verse, "*much more shall we be saved by his life,*" refer to his mediatorial power, and this is confirmed by the last verse of the preceding chapter, "*and was raised again for our justification.*"

Were it true that we had through his blood the justification of which you speak, still it cannot be this which the Apostle here describes: for the argument with which it is connected, and the consequences attributed to it, make it impossible to be that which you say was the expiation of the world's offences; for this must necessarily have been of *universal* application, whereas this is expressly limited to the faithful: it is also the reward of our own merit, but the other was the revocation of a punishment through the merit of another. Such a justification as this could not, as these verses assert, give us a *claim* upon Christ's favour. *If he died for us when we were sinners, now being justified by his blood,* that is, now we are no longer sinners, much more may we expect to be saved by his mediatorial power. This is the evident sense of the words; nor can they consistently be explained in any other. For if justification by blood gives us merely the *means* of salvation, this would be so far from entitling us, as the text says, to become still more the objects of his love, that we should, from our neglect of these means which he had purchased for us, provoke punishment rather than farther benefits. So far *from being saved from wrath*, we should become doubly the subject of it.

* *By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.* The High Priest, through the blood of the altar, could take away no sin; it was the type of that through which alone we can be justified; for God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past; (Rom. iii. 20, 25.)

These arguments apply equally to the next verse; "*For if we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more shall we be saved by his life.*" It is impossible that these words can refer to any other reconciliation than through faith; for what but this can give us, as this text says, an increased claim upon his favour? On what other grounds can we expect to be saved? But if death be the reconciliation of the world, then *its salvation by his life* must necessarily follow. *We*, who are reconciled, are saved. To avoid this inference, you say that the *we*, in the first place, means all men to whom God was reconciled; and in the next place, the same *we*, applies only to the few faithful that are saved by his life. And it is by such a forced construction, that you can alone make the passage subservient to your hypothesis.

The more you examine these verses, the more clearly will you see that the above is the only construction of which the words will admit, and which can be reconciled with the language and argument of the Apostle throughout this Epistle. Remark the terms which he uniformly applies to the dispensation of Jesus Christ, (v. 15.) "*So also is the free gift the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by Jesus Christ.*" (18) "*By the righteousness of one the free gift came unto justification.*" (20) "*Sin abounded, grace did much more abound,*" &c. Does all this accord with reconciliation by death? If I have a truth to communicate, I am bound to do so in appropriate language, and not in terms that convey a meaning

* St. Paul, in a somewhat similar passage, has clearly answered these questions. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" (Heb. vii. 25.) "You that were sometime alienated, yet now hath he reconciled, if ye continue in the faith;" (Col. i. 21, 23.) But if, as he says here, we are reconciled by his death, then it is not they alone who *come unto God by him*, or *who continued in the faith*, but all alike must be saved by his life.

the very reverse of what I have to impart. Is that a gift, a *free gift*, which is purchased? Is an act of *grace*, a claim of justice? A free gift is gratuitous, voluntary, unconditional; but that which is bought with a price, is not a free gift, nor gift at all. And where is the grace in conceding that for which the full value has been paid? If I sell my estate, is it a gift? And in exacting the payment, does my grace abound? St. Paul says, that salvation by faith was a free gift from the abundant grace of God; you, that it was purchased from His justice by the blood of Christ. Can two things be more opposed? Engraft your doctrine upon the Apostles' words, and what does it produce? The free gift of God was purchased by Christ's blood. Is it possible to conceive a greater abuse of terms, or confusion of sense? If we can thus consent to set aside the settled and recognized meaning of words, what may we not prove?

When I find such inconsistencies included in the literal acceptance of these phrases, I am compelled to adopt the figurative sense: and here I meet with no difficulty; for not only are they easily susceptible of this, but I find the language of the same writer, wherever he speaks of reconciliation, uniformly confirmatory of this sense. He declares that reconciliation depends upon the individual himself. (2 Cor. v. 20), "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;" and in this sense also, when properly considered, are the very words of the text in question. He says, "We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Observe, we to Him, not He to us. This is no light or captious remark. It is placing the whole question in its true position; it is bringing you back to the strict meaning of the words, of which yours is a direct perversion. He says, (2 Cor. v. 18, 19); "*Who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. God was in him reconciling the world unto Himself.*" Is it possible for

words to be more diametrically opposed to your doctrine? God, *you say*, was reconciled to the world by Jesus Christ. God, St. Paul says, sought to reconcile the world to *Himself* through Jesus Christ. These verses declare that it was not He that was alienated from the world, but the world from Him. *He* was not the enemy of it. *He* required not to be reconciled to it. *The word of reconciliation is committed unto us*; and what was this word? To bring sinners to repentance; to the knowledge and worship of God: this therefore is the reconciliation which God sought for by Christ; for the Apostle says, that God was in Christ reconciling; that they were Christ's ambassadors; and that therefore it was as if God was in them reconciling them to Himself. Again, he says, God hath reconciled me to Himself by Christ; i. e. Christ is the medium through which God invited me to become reconciled to Him; and I am now Christ's ambassador, appointed also by God, as the medium through which, in like manner, He invites you and all men to be reconciled to Him. Every where it is the same expression of the same sentiment. (Col i. 22); "and by him *to reconcile all things to Himself*;" (21.) "And you that *were aliens, yet now hath He reconciled*." If it were literally true that Christ's mission was to reconcile God to the world, and the knowledge of it was to be communicated to us through the sacred writings, is it not very extraordinary that all these texts should not only not affirm it, but should assert the contrary? Of all the numerous passages where mention is made of reconciliation, shew me one where it refers to God, and not to man.

LETTER XV.

BEYOND these two texts, to which you direct me, it will be needless to push our enquiry, for it would be but a repetition of the same arguments, applied to other passages of a similar import. As these verses are intimately connected with what precedes and follows, we shall quote from Eph. ii. 11—18: “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us: having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

Without a predisposition to find therein other matter than what the words imply, could any one have imagined that they could have been tortured into a proof of the Atonement? In your zeal to support your hypothesis, you convert the shadow into the substance, the appearance into the reality. The very words, blood and sacrifice, no matter how associated, are proofs sufficient. There is not one entire sentence that is not hostile to your doctrine. The cross of Christ has

broken down the wall of partition. It had destroyed the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles, by uniting them in a common faith, by which they had both alike access to the Father. But all this is not the effect of *your* cross, which was not to reconcile man to man, or man to God, but God to man. He says to the Gentiles, that they, not being of the circumcision, were afar off, without knowledge of God, without hope. “*Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them,*” (Eph. iv. 18); but that now they were made nigh by the blood of Christ. But how could the Gentiles, who were afar off on account of their ignorance of God, be brought nigh otherwise than by their being turned away from this ignorance? And how could Christ’s blood effect this, or how could it make peace between the two, but as it was the cause of their common faith?

St. Paul, in here speaking of the union of the Gentile with the Jew through the blood of Christ, figuratively alludes to that of the altar, by which this union was formerly effected. It is no longer by the blood of animals, but by that of Christ, that the Gentile is now united with the Jew; that of twain they are made one, being thereby both alike become reconciled to God, (16) have an equal access to him, (18) being formed into one body, one spirit and temple, of which Christ was the corner-stone; who are no more strangers, but of one household. It is clear that all these effects can only be the result of faith, for without this the world would have been just where it was; the Jew and the Gentile as much at variance, and as far off as before.

Throughout all these verses there is not a single sentiment which quadrates with your doctrine; the entire language throughout is hostile to it. Why does he say to the Gentiles, that *they* were afar off; that they *especially* were drawn nigh by Christ’s blood? Were not all men, according to you, in

their lost state, equally without hope in the world; equally removed from God, until all, without exception, were brought equally nigh by Christ's blood. Between whom was the enmity slain, and peace made? Between God and the world? No, between Jew and Gentile. Who was it that was drawn nigh and reconciled? Man; man unto God. It was upon man alone that Christ's blood operated. It changed not the purposes of God, or his disposition towards man; it was man's disposition towards Him. *The blood of Christ had purged his conscience from dead works to serve the living God;* (Heb. ix. 14.) The language of these texts is the very reverse of what it ought to be to justify your inferences. He tells the Gentiles, that they were farther off than the Jews, because they had no knowledge whatever of God, which the latter had; but that now they were equally nigh unto Him, because through Christ they had attained to an equal knowledge of Him. It is clear, therefore, that the world was more or less removed from Him, in proportion to the knowledge it had of Him, and not as the consequence of its condemnation; and that Christ's blood brought it nigh unto Him, not as the revocation of this condemnation, but as it was the means of instructing it in the knowledge of Him. And elsewhere, this making nigh, this peace, this access to God, are in direct terms stated to be the consequences of faith. "*And put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith;*" (Acts xv. 9.) "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand;*" (Rom. v. 1, 2; see also Col. i. 20 to 23), where it is said, that it pleased God that *Christ having made peace*, i. e. between Jew and Gentile, should be the means of reconciling all to himself, of which you yourselves are a proof; for what were ye formerly but *enemies* to Him by your *wicked works*, but are now brought

nigh unto Him by the blood of Christ's cross, so that he may present you before Him as *holy* members of his Church. And this conversion from a state of sin unto holiness, and this consequent reconciliation to God, is the effect of Christ's blood as an atonement! If you continue to ascribe to blood such effects as these, it becomes little else than a wilful misconstruction of the language.

A farther examination of these passages is needless, for they are all more or less of a similar kind; they are merely the application of the sacrificial language of the old law to Christ, as its antitype, to shew that in him it was fulfilled, that in him was realized that of which it was but the promise.

I have endeavoured to shew you that the literal construction of these verses would make the efficacy of Christ's death sufficient of itself, and that therefore to reconcile it with the doctrine of faith, they must necessarily be taken figuratively. Now if I find that such a use of the terms blood, sacrifice, was essential to the writer to enforce his reasoning, to elucidate his argument, and to demonstrate the truth of what he had to establish; if I find that in repeated instances they are notoriously made use of for faith, that in any other sense the whole context would become absurd and contradictory; (Rom. v. 9, 10., Eph. ii. 10—16., Col. i. 14—23., Heb. ix. 13, 14); if I frequently find that what is assigned to them is in correlative passages attributed to faith alone; if I find in this sense they are explained by the author himself, (Rom. iii. 25, 26); and lastly, if I find that this reconciles all difficulties, clears up all obscurities, makes the language every where consistent, is in unison with its general spirit, with all its laws and doctrines, and moreover with all our best notions of the moral qualities of the Deity;—I cannot hesitate in deciding that to the term blood, as efficacious to salvation, no other than a figurative sense can be given:

whilst you on the contrary, in rejecting this, have no other alternative than the literal, to which you are bound to adhere, whatever be the result ; for observe, I deny the right you assume of qualifying it, by forcing upon the words a meaning which they cannot bear. If their literal sense be taken, you have no right to give them any other than their simple import, viz., that the redemption which we have, we have through his blood ; that being justified by his blood, can only mean, that his blood is our justification ; that being the propitiation of the sins of all men, he in reality effected a remission of them. But this literal acceptance you cannot maintain, and with the abandonment of it you ought in candour to abandon the hypothesis which you have built upon it ; but as this is the only sense of these passages which enables you to appeal to them, you cannot renounce it without renouncing at the same time your main support ; for, setting aside all these phrases, what could you quote in your favour ? In spite, therefore, of the inconsistency which it involves, you still cling to this sense, and say, that his blood did effect the redemption, or the forgiveness of the sins, of the world. But when you come to explain this redemption, it is quite a different thing from that of which the Apostle speaks. Your efforts to maintain, either in whole or in part, the literal sense are vain. For if redemption by blood be strictly asserted, it is inconsistent with that by faith ; and if you modify it so as to make it consistent, it becomes no longer the redemption of the Apostle literally taken. You are constantly quoting the words “our *redemption through his blood*,” and as blood is here exclusively asserted to be of itself the cause, and as you appeal to its literal import, you ought to regard it as the sole cause of forgiveness ; but to this length you dare not go ; you therefore qualify it by saying, that it procured us only the means of forgiveness ; in direct

contradiction of the words which declare that it was the forgiveness itself, as also our translation into the kingdom of Christ. And such I maintain must necessarily be your conclusion, that you have no right to disown it, for that no other inference can be drawn from the literal acceptation of the words. And in all similar phrases, it is asserted to be wholly sufficient of itself, the very word faith never occurring in connection with it. It is blood which justifies; his death which reconciles; his cross which makes nigh. Christ himself says, "My blood is shed for the remission of sins." On the other hand, the independent efficacy of faith is asserted in the same positive terms. The just shall live by faith. Faith is the salvation of our souls. Faith and good works are perfect unto salvation. In all this language there is no co-operation or dependence specified, there is no union of infinite and finite, of Divine and human means. They both alike redeem, alike reconcile, alike justify; they both cleanse from sin, purify the heart, purge the conscience; they are identified, mutually substituted the one for the other; if blood therefore be our redemption, it must be so independently of faith, and in like manner faith of blood. Now were it possible to receive from the one, that of which I am already in possession through the other, it would be superfluous. If I am cured by one physician, the skill of a second can avail me nothing. I cannot admit of your attempt to reconcile these two causes of justification, by urging their joint necessity, for it rests on no positive language of Scripture; on the contrary, nothing can be more unequivocal than its declaration with respect to the *separate* efficacy of each. Shew me, then, your authority for this mutual dependence. It is not by dogmatizing, and assuming the very question in dispute, that I am to be answered. I will not argue upon what you palm upon Scripture, but from what it really is. It is simply said, we are saved both by

blood and by faith. I am only answerable for the words, such as I find them. You may interpolate, you may add and subtract, but my argument must be founded on the texts such as they are, and not upon your supplementary explanations, in order to enable you to reconcile difficulties, and to supply deficiencies, which your interpretation of them occasions. Shew me then one passage where their mutual dependence is acknowledged, where the infinite merits of the one over the insufficiency of the other is distinctly stated. If you cannot, I must regard it as a mere assumption on your part, a gratuitous interpolation of a second redemption, in order to reconcile salvation both by blood and faith; two things that are utterly incompatible; between which there can exist no connection, no moral relation, but a repugnance as great as between anger and love, as vengeance and mercy. I cannot amalgamate together such repulsive qualities, and attribute them to the same God, to the same Redeemer, and the same dispensation. I am therefore necessarily driven to the figurative sense, as the only means of avoiding these difficulties, and of making these two causes of salvation accord both with themselves and with Scripture; whilst on the contrary, your appeal to the literal sense leads you into the most palpable contradictions, and the most unbounded licence of interpretation; for the very words you quote in your favour, it compels you to gainsay, and in direct contradiction to them, to declare that we have *not* redemption through his blood, that faith is not the salvation of our souls; for we must now read, that we are not saved by his blood *except through faith*: that faith is not the salvation of our souls, *except through Christ's blood*. Now of all this supplementary language, there is not a word in the original. It is wholly your own. If we are at liberty to supply whole parenthesis of explanation, there is nothing that we may not prove. These additions, in order to correct the

literal import of the words, and the obligation of forcing upon them a meaning the very reverse of that which they imply, ought to have shewn you the necessity of their figurative sense. But rather than concede this, there is not a page of the New Testament which you are not ready to correct. To all the numerous passages which contain only one simple independent sense, you add a second. Thus you settle the affair between these two disputants for salvation, by according half to the one and half to the other, though the whole is positively asserted to be effected by each separately. Like two claimants in favour of one of whom alone you can justly decide, you compromise between them by an equal partition.

You must admit it to be very extraordinary, that in all these passages there should be no mention whatever of this dependence of the one on the other. Such an omission on the part of the writers was impossible. They must have been too deeply impressed with the awful importance of the truth on which salvation depended; it must have been too strongly associated in their minds, not to have forced itself upon their attention, when it was the very subject of their discourse. Their silence therefore, equally with their language, is adverse to your doctrine. It has no foundation, but your construction of certain phrases, I may say words; all of which are by the writers themselves explained in a very different way; as, “redemption through his blood” is defined to be forgiveness of sins, *not of all*, but of those only *who continue in the faith*; (Col. i. 14—23.) Propitiation, not through his blood, but through faith in it, *for God set him forth, that he might be the Justifier, not of all*, but of those who *believed in Jesus*; (Rom. iii. 25, 26.) His blood cleanseth from all sin; *not all*, but those only who *walk in the light*, those *who confess their sins he will cleanse from all unrighteousness*; (1 John i. 7—9.) Justified by his blood, reconciled by his death, *not all*, but

they only, who, being no *longer in a state of sin, shall be saved by his life*; (Rom. v. 8, 9, 10.) And, in the same way, all those other less direct phrases, but on which you equally lay a great stress; such as, *with his stripes we are healed, we are bought with a price*, &c.; are general references to Christ's sufferings in the accomplishment of his mission, and have no ulterior meaning: as I have before observed, they are nothing more than the common idiom of all languages; as, "our liberties have been purchased with the blood of our ancestors." And from a general phraseology like this, you would infer the condemnation of the world, and its restoration to God's providence through Christ's sacrifice. You would cover over the cheerful and exhilarating pages of the sacred volume, with a dark and sombre cloud of mystery, on the ground of a few such incidental phrases. And these phrases themselves are often explained in a sense the reverse of that which you give to them. *We are healed by his stripes*, by being turned, as the text says, unto righteousness, not as an atonement, but as the means of conversion. So, *you are bought with a price*. St. Paul is here telling the Corinthians, that their new religion introduced no change in the relative duties of man to man. "Whether ye be masters or slaves, ye are alike the servants of Christ, for he *has bought you with a price*; you all therefore belong to him as your common Master. To redeem you from ignorance and sin, he laid down his life, and you therefore owe to him obedience above all;" (1 Cor. vi., vii. 21—23.) To insist upon language so evidently metaphorical is no great proof of the goodness of your cause, or the strength of your arguments. And why so many efforts to constrain into a mysterious sense, what is otherwise rational and consistent? For what can be more easy of solution than all these passages, according to St. Paul's explanation of them? He has told you that the blood of the altar could

not take away sin, that it was but the shadow of the reality, the type of that blood which could effectually take away the sins of all *who repented*; (Acts ii. 38.) And how take them away? Why, as he has so often and so fully explained. Has he not again and again asserted, that Christ, through the merits of his blood, has been appointed our Redeemer, empowered to forgive us our sins? And what are all these texts but a repetition, an almost literal repetition, of the same declarations? In him we have redemption, or forgiveness of sins, through his blood; in other words, he is our Redeemer for having shed his blood. Who could have imagined, *a priori*, that words capable of so plain and simple a sense, in perfect harmony with all his declarations elsewhere, and with the argument of which they form a part, inculcating the sound Christian doctrine, that man is saved by faith and good works, could have been turned into a sense that his salvation was bought by Christ's blood. Had the words conveyed this meaning, there would have been some excuse in endeavouring to give them a sense more conformable to our belief in a God of justice and mercy, and that Christ's mission was, as the Apostle says, an act of pure love and kindness; but to pervert them into a contrary sense, shews but little accordance with the spirit of that volume which you profess to take as your guide, and is no great proof of that subjection of your faith to its doctrines, of which you so much boast.

LETTER XVI.

IN acknowledging two redemptions, an universal one through blood, and an individual one through faith, you introduce into the moral attributes of God, the same

confusion and contradiction as you have done into the language of Scripture. I do not wish to misstate your doctrine, nor impute to it other consequences than what legitimately flow from it; but if you examine it thoroughly, and trace it to its final results, you will see that it imputes to the Divinity the same capriciousness and changeableness of purpose, which belong to human imperfection, by subjecting his absolute and eternal decrees to times and circumstances. Thus we see the same Being on the one hand condemning the righteous to everlasting destruction, and on the other sending Christ into the world, not only to turn others unto righteousness, but to reward them with everlasting happiness; we see Him discarding the just from His presence, yet consenting to the death of His only Son, in order that the wicked may be admitted; we see Him in His judgments shewing no mercy to the faithful, yet touched with compassion for the obdurate and unbelieving; the consenting to Christ's mission, from the purest motives of benevolence, yet requiring it as the means of avenging His outraged attributes. All this your hypothesis necessarily involves. Can that which tends to such conclusions, which ascribes to the Deity all the variableness, all the feelings and passions of humanity, have its origin in truth? Is it not calculated to excite your doubts as to the soundness of your faith? To induce you to suspend it for awhile, until, by a thorough examination of the arguments adduced, you satisfy yourselves whether these things really be so; whether I have pushed my conclusions too far, and charged your system with more than it has to answer for. If you find that this subject has been presented before you in a new light, that many passages have been explained in a sense in which you have never yet viewed them, and that to some of the arguments you have at times assented; it ought to produce a corresponding influence upon your opinions, and you cannot justify a

continuance in them on the mere ground that they are those which you have always held, and that from a distrust of your own judgment you fear to change them. Rely upon it that this is a cheating of your understanding; a voluntary self-imposition; a deliberate persisting in error; a sacrifice of truth to prejudice, perhaps of duty to convenience, for which assuredly you must be held responsible. You are bound to decide by the decision of your judgment; under the authority of Scripture, it is your only guide; and if you follow it in the search of truth, it is all that is required; but if you can reconcile a belief in such doctrines as the Trinity and the Incarnation, because they have been prescribed to you by others, though by those whom you have the most loved and respected, or because they are the ordinances of your church, it is a renunciation of your judgment and the Scriptures for a fallible guide, and you can afterwards claim no right of rejecting any belief which the same authority may impose upon you, however opposed both to reason and to the Divine precepts, since you have already preferred the word of man to that of God.

I am far from saying that we are to have such a confidence in our own judgment, as to neglect that of others; but I do say, that we cannot be justified in adopting implicitly that of any one man, or of any one set of men, when we can have recourse ourselves to the same original source of instruction. We know that the opinion of the wisest and best is but fallible, when formed under the most favourable circumstances; much greater reason therefore have we to distrust their decisions, when placed in situations which have a necessary tendency to bias their judgments. Where our interests are strongly engaged, they exert an influence unknown to ourselves, and disturb the free exercise of our understanding. The most upright judge, with the purest intentions, could

scarcely decide in his own case with a perfect freedom from prejudice. The opinions, therefore, of all whose interests coincide with any particular profession of faith, we have just reason to distrust, whether collectively or individually. All those great doctrinal points which we have received as the decrees of Councils, and Synods, and Convocations, which at first view come upon us with such an imposing aspect, as the concentrated wisdom of numerous and learned bodies, are those which of all others we should the most distrust. They have ever shewn themselves subject to all the prejudices, and passions, and excitements of humanity; so that their counsels have ever savoured more of the spirit of this world, than of the love of truth and of pure religion. They have met either to impose new dogmas upon the consciences of men, or to maintain, with a fiery zeal, what was already established. And though the spirit of the present day restrains the monstrous exhibition of folly and of crime, which have marked their proceedings in former periods, yet there is still that worldly pride and interest, that arrogant assumption of superiority and infallibility, which is of the nature of every Establishment; and even under what you are pleased to call your own tolerant Church, the same spirit of evil is still lurking, repressed but not extinguished, ready to break out if circumstances favoured its developement. Witness its struggle for the retention of penal statutes, for the exclusion of all dissentients from the common rights and privileges of citizens; witness its pertinacious adherence to damnatory creeds and articles, which ever contain within themselves the latent seeds of persecution; and to those monstrous dogmas of faith, which are as repugnant to common sense as they are to the doctrines and spirit of our religion. Yet it is from such sources as these that you, in common with all Christendom, have derived all the capital points of your faith. I do

not mean to say that they are on this account necessarily false; but I do say that it is nothing in favour of their truth, or of the influence which they ought to have upon your judgment; and that it should be a powerful motive to subject your opinions to a calm, independent, and dispassionate enquiry. The result of this, I have no doubt, would be, if you could divest yourselves of the influence of former prepossessions, that you would regard this history of the incarnation, this doctrine of pardon through an infinite satisfaction to infinite justice, as altogether a pure metaphysical abstraction, a conceit of mere human invention. But if you have, as is too often the case on this subject, a predisposition to what is obscure and mysterious, you may always, under the influence of this sentiment, find abundance of subtle arguments and ingenious sophisms wherewith to bewilder your understandings; and with the same inclination to construe the language of Holy Writ, you will readily find therein the confirmation of your opinions. But if you would allow reason and the *undoubted* language of Scripture to be your guides, you would see that those which you now hold upon this subject are as unscriptural as irrational; involving a series of absurdities and contradictions, which the understanding repugns;—the union of perfection and imperfection; a spiritual reconciliation by a carnal sacrifice; justice awarding the same condemnation to the good as to the bad; the punishment of innocence, for the pardon of the guilty; the abandonment by a perfect Being of the work of His own hands; and the necessity of a *material* visitation of it, to correct its errors and imperfections. When all these glaring absurdities, and others, are presented as the necessary consequence of this hypothesis, you seek to reconcile them by a series of sophisms and verbal subtleties, which are the shame of reason and common sense; and when you are driven even beyond the verge of these

out-works, you retreat from farther attack into the citadel of mystery, and seek refuge in impenetrable darkness.

But it is not more unscriptural and irrational, than it is irreligious and immoral. That the faithful and the just should not find favour with God, confounds all our notions of His Divine qualities; it is as repugnant to natural, as it is to revealed religion; to the character of goodness displayed in all His works, and to the light in which He is portrayed in the sacred volume. But the history of your incarnation, from beginning to end, is, in all its circumstances, as revolting to the more amiable attributes of His nature, as it is irreconcilable with that very quality of justice, the necessity of observing which is its only apology, and the ground on which alone you seek to defend it. Was this conspicuous in subjecting all alike to one common visitation? Was it not more wounded by the condemnation of the righteous, than satisfied by the punishment of the wicked? Is to punish its sole office? Is it not also to reward? Nay, is it not more imperious to recompense than to punish? Better that the guilty escape, than that the good should suffer? If justice was thus pre-eminent above all other qualities, if its laws were inviolably to be adhered to, why was an atonement required for the just? Why was the righteousness imputed to Abram by God himself, subjected to the same redemption as the unrighteousness of others? And why the same penalty exacted for every gradation of merit and demerit? And lastly, why was sin to be taken away by the death of Christ, and not by repentance and amendment? Was the blood of innocence a more sweet-smelling savour before God, than faith and obedience? Can you reconcile to yourselves such inconsistencies? Can any one, who can understand or feel the spirit of His religion, engraft such a doctrine as this upon the New Testament, which every where breathes the purest

and sublimest moral; which portrays to us the character of a God who hath no delight in punishment, who is slow to anger and ready to pardon? Alas! the folly and wickedness of man, that would thus seek to pollute the pure fountain of truth, with all the filthy out-pouring of his own vain conceits; that would turn its clear stream into a foul and feculent flood, corrupting and contaminating, where all else would be life, and health, and beauty.

The origin of this, and other errors of a similar kind, which have so long corrupted the doctrine and defiled the simplicity of our religion, may in a great measure be traced to that false system of philosophy which had so long ruled with uncontrolled sway, and had every where enchained, in fetters as it were, the faculties of the human mind. All learning, through its fatal influence, was reduced to mere scholastic disputes. Words were substituted for ideas. Abandoning the only true ground of truth and knowledge, fact and experience, the minds of men were engaged in endless discussions of metaphysical abstractions and logical distinctions. This same love of subtle dispute and paradox, they carried with them into their theological disquisitions. What nature and experiment are to philosophy, so is revelation to faith; and as, in the first case, instead of following these as their guide, they made them subservient to preconceived hypothesis; so instead of founding their faith and doctrine on the clear indisputable language of Scripture, they invented a heap of conceits and sophisms, altogether foreign to the purpose of Christianity; but which they endeavoured, even to the length of perverting and corrupting the text, to palm upon it as its genuine doctrine. But the adoption of a just and rational philosophy, founded on demonstration and induction, has for ever put an end to all the false reasonings and jargon of the schools. A new light has broken in upon mankind. A new

road has been pointed out for the pursuit of learning. Since its discovery, within the last two centuries, a greater progress has been made in every department of useful knowledge, than during the two thousand years that preceded it. A corresponding effect must take place in men's religious opinions. Creeds and articles of faith, and all human dogmatizing, must yield to the force of reason, and the authority of the sacred writers. Already a much greater advance towards the pure and genuine principles of Christianity would have taken place, but for that unnatural alliance between Church and State, which, at least in the present day, can serve no other purpose than that of perpetuating error, and rendering religion a pander to worldly interests.

LETTER XVII.

I BELIEVE it frequently happens, that too great efforts to convince produce a contrary effect: where so much argument is required, there must needs be much difficulty to encounter. It gives the appearance of it, where little or none exists. The great number of treatises in defence of our religion, may of itself have contributed to many a doubt, as we naturally infer that that which requires so much proof, cannot be very clear and convincing of itself. The many details into which we have entered, and occasional repetitions of argument, would scarcely have been necessary to shew, to an unprejudiced enquirer, the fallacy of doctrines which almost every page of the New Testament demonstrates; but it is a far harder task to destroy the influence of preconceived opinions. If any one, of competent understanding, and free from every prepossession, were to enter upon an examination of the sacred writings, I am firmly convinced that these dogmas of the

Incarnation and the Trinity would never suggest themselves to him. To all these passages to which you refer, he would at once affix a figurative sense. He would naturally reason thus:—Here are two assertions, immediately following one the other; justification by blood, and by faith: now as it cannot be the consequence of both, and as I am under the necessity of acknowledging the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith, I cannot regard the term *blood* but as figuratively used; and I can have the less hesitation in this construction, since I find it not only in frequent instances to be that of the writer himself, but that, for various essential reasons, this use of the term was indispensable to his argument. By this simple and obvious inference, he would avoid all difficulties, since to all these passages he would have no hesitation in giving a similar interpretation: for instance, *we have redemption through his blood*. Why should he here create any difficulty where none exists? The phrase would be to him perfectly clear and intelligible: if we owe redemption to the faith which his blood inspires, and to the power which, through it, Christ has acquired of redeeming, why then, in shorter terms, we owe our redemption to his blood; or, as it is here expressed, *we have redemption through his blood*. Here is no forcing of the words to arrive at this simple conclusion; on the contrary, they can admit of no other; for he would say, if I here take the term *blood* literally, it would supersede faith, for it would then comprehend all, instead of being, as here, confined to the faithful. When I find, therefore, that in these passages to which you refer, as well as every where else, justification is the result of faith, I cannot admit of two causes, and two so opposite in their nature; I cannot reconcile so great a moral contradiction, as that He who could promise justification as the reward of faith, as an encouragement to repentance and well-doing, could have required Christ's blood as an induce-

ment to this benevolent conduct. Principles and feelings so opposite could never emanate from the same source.

It is also evident, that with the full intention of ascribing redemption to faith alone, the writer, as a mere affair of composition, would prefer the term blood, from its contrast with that of the altar. To have said, under these circumstances, You through the blood of the altar can obtain but a temporary redemption, but through faith in Christ an eternal one ;—the expression would have been enfeebled, and the force of the comparison would have been lost ; it would have been rendered tame and inapt by a too literal construction, and moreover there would have been wanting the illustration of the type. With this view of the question, he would go on in his perusal of the sacred volume, without the slightest embarrassment from all these formidable passages. He would find all throughout clear, rational and consistent. The view which such an unprejudiced enquirer would form of the doctrines of our religion, would certainly be any thing else than yours. Now suppose, for the first time, you were to place before him your Incarnation and your Trinity. It is not with surprise, but with affright, that he would recoil from such monstrous doctrines. On what, would he immediately exclaim, do you found them ? Whence do you derive them ? From inspiration ; from some supernatural communication ? For, as for the sacred volume before me, I see therein no traces of such a doctrine. What ! that God, like an unskilful artist, should abandon His creation, the work of His own hands ; that He should throw it aside as an imperfect machine, inapt to its original purpose ; that man, rational man, created for immortality, should have been cast away, as unfitted for his destiny, nay, even the very just ? And for the truth of all this, you appeal to the sacred writings, where to me every thing breathes an opposite spirit. What are all these

numerous precepts of His Messenger, enjoining forgiveness of injuries, of mercy to offenders, of returning good for evil; what is his declaration of the abundant joy in heaven over a repentant sinner; that he who worketh righteousness is accepted? Is it from all this, that you infer this visitation upon the righteous of the offences of the wicked? Do you found God's abandonment of the world on all those numerous passages, where His uniform love for it is asserted? Is it from His communications, for a series of years, with His chosen people, expressly that the world might *not* become an alien and a stranger to Him? In His assurance to them, that notwithstanding their waywardness and disobedience, He would still be their God, and that through them should all the nations of the earth be blessed? And when, in the fulness of time, the great mystery was revealed by the mission of Christ; when the veil was torn aside, and He displayed himself to all as the common Parent of all, by the establishment of a benign and merciful religion; encouraging to virtue by the promise of a remission of all past sins and of an eternal recompense; which was destined to become the bond of universal peace and union, and to cover with its sacred mantle all the families of the earth; is all this in accordance with the spirit, which condemned the whole race of man to perdition? Oh! but you reply, all this was a subsequent boon, purchased by Christ's sacrifice. What! after the condemnation of the righteous, does the Almighty require for the revocation of His edict the blood of innocence? This is but covering with a still deeper dye the enormity of your doctrine. Do you give to Christ's mission this character of blood and vengeance, because, in the volume to which you refer, it is every where stated to be one of peace and good-will to all, and the most signal proof of God's *love* for the world? Do you thus pourtray the Deity as unjust, cruel and wrathful, because He

is therein represented as slow to anger, long suffering, punishing in mercy, having no pleasure in sacrifice, desiring not the death of a sinner; and yet, according to you, the blood of His Son was a sweet-smelling odour before Him. Not so, you again exclaim; this sacrifice was necessary as a satisfaction to justice. The Deity had been outraged by the wickedness of man; the reparation must be equal to the offence; a God was offended, a God must atone; an infinite satisfaction was required, and the second person of the Trinity afforded it. Now all this would plunge the mind of this unsophisticated enquirer into a perfect amazement and stupefaction; all this must appear to him as the very consummation of absurdity and impiety. It is evident, he would say, that the whole of this is, from beginning to end, an imposition upon the sacred writings, for I can find nothing therein that favours, but every thing that opposes it. I can recognize in this doctrine, neither the motive nor the object of Christ's coming, nor the character of the God who sent him. It is not the God of the New Testament. *His* motive was pity for lost and fallen man. It was His love for the world; for He had not ceased to love it, though the world had ceased to love Him. It was on His part an act of *grace*; and the more sin abounded the more was this *grace* manifested; (Rom. v. 15, to the end.) It was a *free gift*; a pure, unfettered, spontaneous gift. The object was to turn sinners to repentance; not to save the righteous, for *they had no need of a physician*. God sent Christ into the world to *beseech* it to become reconciled to Him; and He consented to his death only as the means of accomplishing this, by establishing that faith, through which all were to be saved; for his resurrection from the dead, as the eternal Mediator of the world, was that great event to which all future ages would appeal for the truth of their religion, as the solemn sanction of God of all

that His messenger had said and done. This, he would say, is the result of *my* study of the Scriptures. I cannot enter so profoundly into the meaning of the writers, as to discover, in their seemingly plain and simple language, an ulterior sense beyond that which is apparent; I cannot see that rigid and unsparing justice (to allow you the term,) is synonymous with love and mercy; that an act of grace is the vindication of personal injury; that a free gift can be sold for a price; that a sentence of eternal enmity is a seeking after reconciliation: such hidden mysteries do not reveal themselves to men of ordinary capacity and of common sense; our powers of criticism do not extend beyond the fair and legitimate meaning of words. It is our misfortune that such secrets should be concealed behind a veil so thick as to be impenetrable to our view; a fatal defect in our vision, accompanied, as you say, with our everlasting condemnation. And the more you attempt to remove this obscurity from us, the darker does it become, the more difficult is it to reconcile the language with your exposition of it: there is no resemblance between them; every feature of the original is lost; it is a new God, a new Saviour, a new doctrine, a new redemption. All the history of Christ, as detailed by the sacred historians, is in every thing worthy of a benevolent Being, of a kind and merciful Providence; but in the light in which you hold Him up to us, we can no longer recognize the God of the New Testament, the benign Author of our religion, the Parent of the universe. It is a new being, a creation of your own. You have already added two co-equal existences to the Father, and here is a third, sovereign justice, a new and independent principle, more powerful than all, coercing the Deity, restraining by its inexorable decrees the exercise of all His most precious attributes; His goodness, His mercy, His love. It is like the controlling destiny or fate of Paganism;

or, which it more resembles, the Manichæan Spirit of Evil, thwarting the influence of the Spirit of Good; for, colour it as you will, the whole is a history of evil, totally inconsistent with a benevolent Being. You may say, that however it may appear to us, yet, in the inscrutable counsels of God, all this may be consistent with the best and purest motives; that it is not more difficult to reconcile with a kind Providence, than the evil with which we are every where surrounded. It is true that the union of so much evil with good, is a problem which we shall never be able to solve; but we are not altogether without a glimpse of light into this mystery, which shews that so far from being inconsistent with the Divine qualities, it is demonstrative of them. Imperfection must exist. The creature must be inferior to the Creator. But, in numberless instances, we see the evil so ordained as to be the means of a greater good; so that, properly speaking, there is here no such thing as evil. It is not for us to penetrate into the operation of this principle in all its details; it is sufficient, from what we do see, to infer that all works to good in the end. But, in the case before us, there is no mystery, there is no concealment; the whole transaction is developed; its motives and its objects are fully made known; and if they can be reconciled with a good Being, then it is certain that we know not yet what goodness is: it is not that of the New Testament; it is not that sense of right and wrong, which nature and reason point out to all; it is not that moral law, by the observance of which we are assured that we may become worthy of being admitted as *pure* and *holy* into the presence of God.

If, therefore, I can find no traces of this abandonment of the world in that book of Revelation to which you refer me, where else am I to find it? Am I to discover it in the book of Nature? In that confusion into which all must have fallen

when deprived of God's sustaining care? Did order on this occasion give place to disorder? Was the mighty wheel of Nature reversed? Did the Divine Spirit which pervades it cease to operate, to bind, to control, to regulate? Were its movements suspended? Did the rain cease to descend? the sun to enlighten, to warm, to fructify? Did the earth refuse its abundant stores for the convenience, the pleasure, and the sustenance of man? Were the laws of his moral system confounded? No farther distinction between virtue and vice? Was man become thoroughly corrupted by this destitution of him? Was his original impress of Divinity altogether effaced? Had he no more knowledge of right and wrong? No more capacity for good? No; there was no such change in the moral, or in the material world. The nature of man remained the same, possessed of the same reason, instinct, appetites and affections: witness the many wise and good of every period, of whom special mention is made; and you accuse the Almighty of thus continuing a race of rational and intelligent beings, furnished with capacities of high moral, intellectual and religious advancement, and all to no purpose! Of rendering unattainable the object for which the means were evidently given! The absurdity of all this doctrine is no less revolting to the understanding, than its impiety is to the moral feeling. Can you conceive it possible that a Being, whose prescience extends through all ages; to whom the past, the present, and the future are but one eternal *now*; whose decrees can be subject to no casualties, to no remote contingencies, can receive offence and demand reparation for that which He himself had both foreseen and foreordained? Every thing is under His direction, and consequently whatever is, is good. When God created man, it was for a wise and benevolent end; and this end could not fail of being accomplished, for He hath not left it to finite

creatures to thwart His eternal purposes. He who has numbered the hairs of our heads, who hath meted out the sea, and weighed the mountains in a balance, hath not exposed to hazard His most perfect creation. If the destiny of man was utter perdition, as a good Being, God would not have created him; and as a wise Being, He would not have passed a condemnation upon him, and then required Christ's blood in order to revoke it. His plans stand in no need of subsequent correction, nor would He thus have employed means to no end; for this blood, as an atonement, took away nothing from the original cause of the condemnation; the world was just as wicked as before. Nothing can shew more clearly the needlessness both of the condemnation and the atonement. It was doing and undoing from mere caprice; for no purpose; subservient to no moral end. If the death of Christ could really have taken away the sins of the world, then, by lessening the cause, the offence itself might have ceased. But instead of removing, it did but add to it. It is a strange conclusion, therefore, to which you arrive, that the augmentation of the offence should be its reparation; that the effect should cease with an increase of the cause.

Such would be the reply of a candid enquirer to your doctrine of the Incarnation; the simple and natural view he would take of it. It is not according to the definition in my Dictionary of the terms Atonement, Propitiation, Redemption, &c., that I must strictly interpret the passages where they occur; I must seek their meaning in their origin, in the type to which they refer, in the sense which they constantly bear with the argument and the context; in fine, that in which the writers themselves explain them. When I have thus, from these real sources, ascertained the true construction of these phrases, (which, indeed, by this means becomes no longer mine, but that of the authors themselves,) I cannot, as a lover of

truth, suffer myself to be led into your erroneous construction of them, by taking the literal instead of the scriptural sense, and allowing the term, thus literally taken, every where to qualify the argument, instead of the argument the term.

LETTER XVIII.

It is a far harder task for me to reply to your dogma of the Trinity : not that in itself it presents any difficulty, for it is if possible more palpably unscriptural and irrational than that of the Atonement. The difficulty lies in arguing with those who have manifestly on this subject renounced both Reason and Scripture. To what arguments are they accessible? Whence am I to draw them? If at bright noon-day you were to deny that the sun shone, and to my reference to its warmth, its brilliance, and its shadow, you were to deny these as proofs, I should not know to what other arguments I could have recourse to convince you. To what purpose is it to refer you to the whole volume of the Old Testament, throughout announcing, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, and under every variety of form, the sole uncompounded individuality of the Deity? *I am one, and besides me there is no other. I am the First and the Last.* To what purpose the confirmation of this truth by our Saviour and all his Apostles, avowing, in the most decided terms, the sole supremacy of the Father, and his own inferiority, before, during, and after the completion of his mission? To what purpose thus to quote you Scripture from Genesis to Revelations, every where proclaiming aloud the great fundamental truth of the unity of the Deity, when, by the aid of your metaphysical sophistries, you can turn all this plain language into a sense the very reverse of what it bears? When God

says, "I am one alone;" No, you reply; you are a Trinity. When Christ says, "The Father is greater than I;" No, say you; you are His equal. When St. Paul says, "that in the end he must deliver up all power to the Father who gave it him;" No, you again repeat; he cannot do this, for it is inseparable from his substance. After this, to what purpose to quote arguments from Scripture to disprove your Trinity. Is not this voluntarily shutting your eyes to the light, and denying at clear mid-day that the sun shines? Nor can I appeal to Reason any more than to Scripture: having once brought yourselves to admit that a being can be composed of three distinct parts, and yet be without parts; that *three* Gods separately perfect, do form numerically but *one* perfect, you have no longer any claim to be treated as rational beings. You assert what is impossible. You cannot believe that which involves a palpable contradiction. If I were to maintain that the addition of three units was not more than one unit, you would deem me unworthy of a reply. Yet I have only to cover this over with an air of religious mystery, and your imagination becomes at once violently affected; your reason abandons you, your judgment becomes disordered, and that which your understanding rejected, you are now ready to receive as a mystery. The simple statement that three times one is equal to one, you would at once reject as false; nevertheless when this is submitted to your judgment in the unintelligible language of your Articles, that by some mysterious and incomprehensible union three perfect beings were so joined as to form but one sole uncompounded being, you believe, or rather you think that you believe it; as if a jargon of metaphysical terms could change the absolute nature of the fact. To the naked proposition you cannot assent; by no effort of your own can you force yourselves to believe it; yet when it is presented to you in obscure and

sophistical language, under the garb of a mystery, you can give your assent to it; as if the quality of truth depended upon mere *verbiage*; or as if that which was false could by any mystery be made true, in which case no such thing as truth could exist; but as this is in its own nature immutable, you ought, when you are called upon to believe that a being may be compounded of other beings, and yet remain uncompounded; that it may be composed of parts, and yet be without parts; that three essences, separately existing, yet make but one essence; you ought at once to reject all such absurdities as incredible, for no one ever did or can believe them; it is as morally as it is physically impossible, that the same thing can be, and not be, at the same time.* Your

* Your assent to them is a self-delusion. You conscientiously profess your belief, for there is no reason to question your sincerity: I am not however prepared, from a mawkish affectation of candour, to put the same favourable construction upon the motives of many of your spiritual instructors. When I see them entering upon the sacred functions of their profession, with few requisite qualifications; looking towards it as a means of private gain, as a concern of this world more than of the other; though he, whose followers they pretend to be, declared that his kingdom was not of this world; when I see them calling themselves the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, grasping after profit and power, revelling in all the luxuries, in all the pride and vanities of the flesh; am I uncharitable in assigning to a conduct so inconsistent with their professions, other motives and feelings than a pure love of truth, a sincere desire of promoting the glory of God, and the welfare of His creatures? All this is but the consequence of your Establishment, which, like every other that has existed, necessarily leads more or less to a prostitution of religion to secular interest. What is that prospect of progressive advancement, that gradation of dignities and emoluments as the reward of conformity, but so many bribes to the conscience? Little does he know of human nature, little hath he learnt from the past history of man, who is not aware, that the inevitable tendency of all this is to corrupt the heart and pervert the judgment. What absurdity is there which I could not establish; what monstrous dogma of faith to which I could not find adherents, with a long list, at my disposal, of vicarages,

assent to such propositions makes it impossible to appeal to you as *reasonable* enquirers: thus I am precluded from the only two sources of argument open to me; in the first place, by your admission of absurdities, which are altogether a renunciation of reason; and in the next place, by your predetermination to pervert what is so simple in its construction, so definite in its meaning, that if such language can be subject to misconstruction, words are inadequate to convey any truth. Let me put this question to you; suppose, for a moment, without any reference to the Trinity, you had to announce the *simple* unity of God, could you have used any other language than that of the prophets of old? And if, on the contrary, it was the doctrine of the Trinity which you had to

rectories, prebends, canonries, deaneries, bishoprics, and archbishoprics? Need I other proofs than these of the truth of my principles, of the orthodoxy of my tenets? Hath it not ever been so? *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, will ever be the cry of every craft by which its votaries thrive, whether Pagan, or Mahometan, Roman, or Protestant. All in their turn are in the right, all have alike a monopoly of the truth. Such pretensions to exclusive orthodoxy are as absurd as they are arrogant. When the professors of any faith vaunt, to the disparagement of every other, the sole excellence of that *by which much profit cometh to them*, do they think that all this will now pass current with the world; that the motives to this superabundant zeal will not be appreciated? When I see the Right Reverend Lords of your Church chanting forth the *exclusive* excellence of that Establishment by which they have been raised to both temporal and spiritual power and dignity, it reminds me of Cato's remark upon the augurs of his day; that he marvelled how they could, in the exercise of their functions, look each other in the face with a grave countenance. If all that they professed were the truth itself, yet their sincerity under such circumstances would be questioned. The purest and the soundest doctrine must receive contamination from its union with this spirit of Mammon.

I do not mean to apply these observations to the very many wise and pious Divines, who do honour to your Church. They are meant more to point out, in the abstract, this necessary tendency of all such Establishments to create a spirit of intolerance, hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness.

inculcate, would you have used *their* language? Answer me in the sincerity of your hearts. To my second question, your reply is already given in your creeds and articles. Compare their unintelligible Trinitarian jargon, with the sublime and simple Unitarian language of the Bible. What a contrast! And you would identify their doctrines! Why, they are as far asunder as the poles, and as diametrically opposed. Until this Trinitarian scheme was first broached, who ever could, who ever did infer it from this book? Did they who ought the best to understand it, to whom it was specially addressed, who lived in communication with its inspired writers, did they thus interpret its language? And, notwithstanding your illumination upon this subject, have their descendants to this day swerved one iota from this creed of their forefathers?

To you, who can so easily satisfy yourselves that all these declarations of the unity of God are to be understood in a sense the very reverse of that which the language conveys, it would be in vain to oppose them directly; but it is possible that, by implication, they may afford an argument that may be of more force with you than the words themselves. "I am the Lord, the holy one of Israel;" (Is. xliii. 3.) "I am the first and the last, and besides me there is no God;" (xliv. 6.) "Before the day was, I am He;" (xliii. 13.) "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God beside me;" (xlv. 5.) "I am God, and there is none like me," (xlvi. 9.) &c. When Isaiah wrote these words, what was *his* idea of the unity which he thus proclaims? What was the idea which he *meant* to convey, and which he *did* convey, to those to whom they were addressed? Was it your Trinitarian unity? The question would be too absurd to put, but that the answer which you are obliged to make ought to silence you for ever, at least as far as this book is

concerned. The simple unity here taught was the cornerstone of their religion, the grand article of their faith, the object of all their laws and institutions; and it was to preserve it entire, that God raised up Isaiah, and others like him, to admonish and to prophesy; and as he thus wrote under the influence of inspiration, surely he must better know than you the nature of that unity which he proclaimed, and they to whom he addressed himself, and who, no doubt, were orally instructed by him. Were they taught other doctrines than this; and in all their writings, and traditions, and commentaries, is there the slightest deviation from this fundamental dogma? Suppose that there had been no other dispensation than the Jewish, that Christianity had never been promulgated; read the Old Testament from beginning to end, mark the clear, precise, and emphatic language in which the unity of the Deity is asserted; the simple, unmixed, unallied unity. Now, had you lived under that dispensation; had you searched the Scriptures from morn to night, from youth to age, would you have discovered therein the doctrine of the Trinity, of the equality of Christ and of the Holy Ghost? Must you not necessarily have formed, from the uniform tenor of the language, the same idea of the individuality of the Deity, which was the constant and universal belief of the Jews, when they elapsed not into apostacy? God had instructed them Himself in this truth by His own voice. Had any one presumed to have taught any other belief than this; had he preached the doctrine of a Trinity, of two other Beings to whom their worship was equally to be addressed, no matter how connected or related, he would have suffered death by the law. Now, were they ever reprov'd for this belief? On the contrary, were they not upheld in it by all their inspired writers, for the space of more than a thousand years, by the threats of punishment,

and the promises of reward? If God, then, was at that time this single essence, He must still be the same, alike unchangeable for ever. If God be not this single essence, which He asserted Himself to be, which He knew that the Jews always believed Him to be, and in which belief He invariably confirmed them by the concurrent voice of all His prophets, what are we to infer? Can God deceive? Will you urge here, as the only reply you can make to this reasoning, that God only partially revealed Himself under the Jewish, and more fully under the Christian dispensation? But this would be a contradiction of Himself, not an explanation. The God of the Christians would belie the God of the Jews. He would be no longer the same God. If He taught man to believe at one time that He was an individual, and at another a triune essence; if at one time He was all and every thing, *the first and the last, and nothing beside Him*; and that at another time there were two others who equally shared with Him His Divine perfections; then what reason have we to be assured that at some future dispensation there may not be, instead of three, three hundred Gods revealed, and the reign of Polytheism once more obtain on earth? Throughout the whole, God declares His unchangeableness. “Before the day was, I am He;” (Is. xliii. 13): and in reference to the time of His second dispensation, He says, *They shall know in that day that I am He; that I am He who doth speak: behold it is I*. Thus what He declared Himself to be under the first covenant, does He proclaim Himself to be under the second; the same identical belief of His individuality does He continue to enjoin, and in the same terms. Under both dispensations does He alike assert His sole undivided supremacy in this emphatic language. How could He do this if He shared it with others? How attribute to Himself all Divine perfections, when others equally partook of them.

In this case it is clear that the Jews, who worshipped God as an individual Being, were in ignorance all the time; they had an imperfect knowledge of Him, though God declared that He had manifested Himself to them; they rendered an imperfect and false worship, though God and all His prophets instructed them in this worship as the only acceptable one. The force of this argument is not to be set aside by quibbling upon the word unity, by replying that this is also your belief, and that the acknowledgment of this principle on the part of the Jews was all that was necessary. This is not the question. It is whether there be three Gods or one; it is between your Trinitarian and the Jewish unity. They are not to be confounded. Of the former they had not the remotest conception. All the language of God and His prophets was to inspire the latter, and nothing more; and God, knowing that this necessarily must have been the effect of this language, still continues it unto the end; an incontestable proof of His sanction of this belief, and therefore of its truth.* And it

* If I wished to define, in the strongest manner, the simple unity of the Deity, I could not find, in the whole compass of language, terms more energetic than those in which this truth is inculcated in the sacred writings, in every conceivable manner, and under every varied form of expression, from mere allusion, to the most solemn and emphatic declarations; reiterated, I should say on any other occasion, even to satiety: nor is there a single passage, and I speak it without fear of error, whence the Trinity can be fairly deduced. Of all the doctrines, therefore, which have ever appeared, it is the least founded. The religion of the most barbarous and ignorant nations; the whole system of polytheism; the adoration of the heavenly bodies; the worship of fire; the Manichæan principles of good and evil; the grossest errors of the Church of Rome; infallibility, absolution, transubstantiation itself; all have had some foundation either in Nature or Revelation; nor was faith required in what was inconsistent and impossible. But this doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to support it, either in nature, reason, or revelation; and it may therefore with justice be brought forwards as the strongest instance of human prejudice which the annals of the world can exhibit.

was not only under the first dispensation, that this was enjoined by Divine authority; by this same authority, this same doctrine, and in the same words, was also reconfirmed under the second dispensation. The Jews were told by an inspired Apostle, that the notion which they had always entertained of the individuality of God was a true one. (St. James ii. 19., Rom. xvi. 27.) “*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well.*” You have always asserted His unity, you are right; what you have always believed Him to be, that He is; what was the God of the Jews, so is the God of the Christians. Now can you bring yourselves to admit, that if God was not what He had always represented Himself to be to the Jews, and what they believed Him to be, would an inspired Apostle of Christ have confirmed them in their error, by making use of the very language which had all along deceived them; and knowing that they believed in the simple unity, would he have told them that this was a true belief? Must he not necessarily have held a different language? It is true, he would have said, God is one; but do not deceive yourselves; not in the sense in which you have hitherto understood it: the time is now arrived in which the whole truth is to be communicated to you, in which the nature of the Godhead is to be clearly made known, for it has pleased Him in these latter days to reveal this great mystery, by a full manifestation of Himself. St. James was perfectly aware that he to whom he was addressing himself, had no other idea of God’s individuality than that which had always been held by their forefathers; if then this was an erroneous idea, and, as you say, incompatible with their salvation, could he possibly have left them ignorant of this? At the very moment when he was instructing them in the means of salvation, could he have told them that all that was necessary thereto was to add to *their* faith good

works, when this very faith, according to you, was their condemnation, in spite of all their good works? This must therefore have been the true faith, or else the Apostle was knowingly deceiving them to their perdition. As a preacher of truth, and anxious for their eternal welfare, he could not have failed to have corrected, as one of these means of salvation, the erroneous notions which both he and they had formerly entertained of the nature of the Deity. Does he do so? No; he leaves them in their ignorance; nay, he does more, he upholds them in it; he tells them that their faith is whole, and requires nothing but the support of good works. They, therefore, *did well* in *their* belief of God's unity, or else it is clear that the inspired Apostle himself was ignorant of the truth.

Consider this text apart from all others; banish from your mind all previous opinions; place yourselves for a moment in the situation of those to whom these words were addressed, having no other notion of God's unity than that in which you had been strictly educated, as the great cardinal point of your faith; suppose, under these circumstances, that you were told by your inspired instructor, himself a Jew, and well knowing the nature of your belief, that as to His unity, such as was the God of the Jews, so was the God of the Christians; tell me then, in all the sincerity of your hearts and as honest enquirers after truth, whether you could have regarded this in any other light than as a solemn confirmation of that belief, which as a Jew you had always entertained of His individuality. You cannot give any other than one reply, and that ought to be decisive with you; for if this belief were not the truth, the Apostle would have deceived you; and if it were the truth, where is your Trinity? For there is as great a difference between the Apostle's doctrine and your present belief, as between your's and mine. The consequence of this

inevitable inference is, that you have either misinterpreted the passages whence you infer the Trinity, or you would make the Scriptures, speaking always in the name of the God of truth, assert one thing in one place, and the opposite in another. I should not fear, on the authority of this text alone, to assert the unity of God against all the orthodox decisions of Christendom; for no man or body of men can be bold enough to affirm that the Jewish notion of this unity is not essentially different from that which your Trinitarian doctrine inculcates. Both cannot be true; if therefore, as the Apostle says, the Jews were in the right, you must be wrong.

This constant acknowledgment of one God on the part of the Jews, from their first origin to the present day, divinely confirmed to them under both the covenants, does appear to me to carry with it irresistible weight. I regard it as an attestation by the Almighty Himself, to His own sole supremacy; a rejection of all divided or participated authority. I neither can nor dare oppose myself to it. And what are the grounds on which you object? A few passages, chiefly in the New Testament; in the one place, a notorious interpolation; in another, a designed mistranslation and perversion of the original text; one or two obscure passages, capable of different senses, and a forced construction of some others: and for these you consent to set aside the whole doctrine of the Old Testament, corroborated in every page of the New by the concurrent testimony of Christ and his Apostles; by the former, not only in his incarnate, but in his pre-existent and glorified state. "I came," he says, "not of myself, but my Father *sent* me." Who was this *me*? Not *me* in my present, but in my former state. The sending must have been previous to his coming. The order must have been given before he could execute it. And in like manner, after his ascension, in his own kingdom, it was not in *his* power, but in the Father's

alone, to grant what was asked for the children of Zebedee. In these and other instances of avowed inferiority, the objection of his humanity cannot be urged ; but no doubt, in lieu of this, you will not lack other arguments, wherewith to refine away the plain sense of the passages, and to convert an acknowledgment of subordination into one of equality. As to his incarnate state, his whole ministry is one continued confession of his inferiority to the Father. He alone was wise and good : from Him alone he derived all the power with which he was invested. All these acknowledgments, you say, belong only to his humanity. I have before endeavoured to expose to you the fallacy of such an argument, from the uniformity of character he displayed throughout his mission, acknowledging in no instance the existence of his two natures, but acting and speaking consistently as the Christ, with a power and authority more than human, and even on those very occasions where you refer to his humanity. When his disciples enquired of him the time of the last day, he replied that he knew not ; an ignorance which you cannot do otherwise than attribute to his human state.* But did they refer to him as a mere man, or as to one whom they knew to be possessed of more than human power and knowledge. And it is in this character in which he replied to them, for he tells them, with a tone of authority and a consciousness of knowledge which belong not to man, that no one knew this but the Father, not the angels in heaven, *nor even I, the Son of man*. This reply is not in his character of simple humanity ; it can only be therefore as that Christ's uniting, as you say, the two natures : but in this case, how could he be ignorant of this event ? That he did know it, his reply renders impossible ; that he did not know it, his Divinity

* See also that decisive passage, Acts i. 7.

alike makes impossible. But no matter in what capacity he replied, as man, as a superior spirit, as God-man, or a God, it is clear that in every character he expressly acknowledges his ignorance, by *exclusively* restraining this knowledge to the Father *alone*. What can you answer to this unanswerable objection? The fact is, that every step you advance in the Scriptures presents to you some new difficulty. Christ's acknowledgment, that all his power was a communication to him, is quite irreconcilable with his Divinity; for if this was communicated to him as a mere man, in what does he differ from Peter or Paul, except in the degree in which he was visited by the Holy Spirit? If it was a communication made to a superior Being, it is then certain that this superiority was not that Divine nature which you attribute to him; for, in this case, this power would of itself have been inherent in him, and he would have stood in no need of receiving it from others; indeed, how could it have been possible to have communicated to him that of which he was already in possession; and if it had been possible, he never could have said that to this communication *alone* he was indebted for all his power. This is all so plain and self-evident, that the bare statement suffices; argument is here superfluous; it is forging arms to combat shadows.

When you refer to his humanity in these instances, where he avows his imperfection, his incapability of himself of doing that which at the same time raises him above humanity, you furnish a most powerful argument against yourselves; for you hereby deprive him of his Divinity, not only as man, but as the Christ, for the power by which he acts is not his in either capacity. The resuscitation of Lazarus, (an act far beyond all human power,) he attributes to the Father, through whom alone he was enabled to effect it; and it is not in his character as man, but as the worker of this miracle, that he

disclaims all other means as inadequate to the accomplishment of it. With what consistency could he say this, when he knew that there dwelt in him a power independent of, and equal to, that of the Father; a power with which he was immediately connected, and to which he would more naturally look for support? If on every occasion which required a superhuman power, it was communicated to him; if he acknowledged that in him it lay not, that it proceeded and could only proceed from the Father, in what does he differ from any other being, in whom the Holy Spirit operates; and where then was his Divinity, where the second Person, where the Incarnation, where the Atonement, and where was your Christ? Your doctrine incorporates this person in the body of Christ; if so, why was this continued sustenance of the first Person required? There was no more reason why the humanity of Christ should be dependant on this, than on the second or third; for except its connection with the flesh, you assert its perfect equality with the first: why then this constant invariable reference to the Father; and above all, which is decisive of the whole question, why this avowal on the part of Christ, that the Father is the *only* source of all power, and knowledge, and goodness? Christ prays to Him as the *sole* object of his addresses; an unquestionable acknowledgment of His supremacy.* It is clear from all this, that the Divine part of Christ either could not, or would not, support the mortal. He acknowledges no assistance from it in any instance; it aided him not in any of his stupendous

* Observe that this relates to God the Father separately. Attempt not to evade this objection by that which your creed forbids; a confusion of the Persons. It is the Father who is alone the special object of Christ's acknowledgment. The second person was incarnate, and you cannot identify them, without making them both so; which your creed expressly denies.

works; it dictated not the wisdom of his speech, (John xiv. 10—24); it comforted him not under all his sufferings, nor sustained him in his last mortal agony. On all these occasions it was the Father alone that was his aid and succour. If then the Divine part was without influence; if it operated not within him; if during all his ministry it was quiescent and inactive; if it sympathized not with his humanity, to what purpose did it inhabit the body of Jesus? So far from forming that intimate, essential and inseparable union of which you speak, it was an entire disunion, to such an extent that the human part appears throughout to have been unconscious of the indwelling of the Divine.

LETTER XIX.

It is very extraordinary that any one like yourselves, of competent understandings and desirous of truth, who profess to make the word of Scripture, the guide of their faith even to the renunciation of their reason, can yet adhere so strongly to opinions to which this very word is so manifestly opposed. The whole history of Christ is but one continued avowal on his part of subordinate authority; of the exercise of power confided to him for a special purpose. St. Paul says, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; and that he now stood in the place of Christ under the influence of the same Divine Spirit, God the Father, whom he avows to be the only one God, from whom all things proceed; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he created all things; (1 Cor. viii. 6.) Thus the language of St. Paul is that of Christ; it was the Spirit of the Father alone who operated in both alike; His supremacy and the subordination of the

Son is alike acknowledged by both. St. Paul, in a manner, puts himself upon an equality with the latter: they were, he says, sufferers and labourers together, and joint heirs of God as His common children. Now who is this being with whom St. Paul claims an inheritance of glory? The Christ, in whom for ever dwelleth the second person of the Trinity; God, perfect in every thing but as touching the flesh? How could St. Paul put himself upon an equality with Him as a *common child of God*? With what propriety, apply the term *heir* to Him, to whom are all things? This degradation of Christ can admit but of two inferences;—either St. Paul acknowledges not his Divinity, or he thus speaks of him apart from his Divine nature; that is, he separates what you pronounce inseparable; he divides into two what you declare to be for ever one *sole* substance. Which of these conclusions will you adopt? The first you cannot; it would be a direct abandonment of your belief. And how can you reconcile with it the second, to which it is so flatly opposed? But it is not merely here that this indivisible substance is necessarily divided, but it must be so in every instance where his inferiority is alluded to; that is, *every where that mention is made of him*. So that instead of the two natures being for ever inseparable, they *are never united*. Shew me, in one instance, where this union can be maintained; where you are not obliged to exclaim, Here it is only his humanity that is spoken of: Here it relates to him only as to the flesh. Here! why it is every where the same. Shew me a passage where he is placed, either by himself or by others, upon an equality with the Father. I admit not those figurative expressions, where he says, “I and the Father are one.” “He who seeth me, seeth the Father:” which he clearly explains by saying, that it was not he, but the Father within him, who spoke and acted. “The Father is in me, and I in the Father, even as I am in

you, and you in me." And as St. Paul says, that God was in Christ and in him. The meaning of all these sayings is so notorious, that any one who would adduce them as proofs of equality would be undeserving of a reply. What I require is a recognition of this equality in precise and literal terms, such as those wherein the contrary is so uniformly asserted; for it is here alone that you would be enabled to speak of Christ as one substance, that you would not be under the necessity of appealing to his humanity apart; but this case never occurs, so that this eternal union of the two natures is an eternal disunion. If in his life, his death, his mediatorship, (for in all states, his inferiority is declared,) he is to be for ever separated from his Divinity, where is your authority for having irrevocably joined them? If he is ever to be considered apart, to what end, nay where, is the incarnation of the second Person? Through all his Epistles, St. Paul, whom you regard as your great tower of strength, has nevertheless, of all the sacred writers, spoken in the clearest terms of the inferiority of Christ. He never alludes to him as a substance to which was essentially united a Person of the Godhead; he speaks of him as Christ speaks of himself, as commissioned by God, with power adequate to the accomplishment of his object, which was afterwards confirmed and enlarged by his appointment as Judge of the world. This is the being whom St. Paul calls a labourer, and a child of God, and a joint-heir with himself of glory, though in a less degree, for he places him in a rank above himself between man and God; (1 Cor. xi. 3.) *The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.* Here is a regular scale of gradation. Now if St. Paul had known that this Christ comprehended the second Person, very God, would he thus have placed him in a rank below God? But on no occasion, from any one

single expression of his can you infer his Divinity; his language throughout can apply only to what you call his inferior state. If this be uniformly the case, not only with St. Paul, but with the other sacred writers, and with Christ himself, the only inference is, that he must really be that in which all concur in describing him to be. This very Christ, no matter of what rank or nature he may be, *such as he is*, he is by all asserted to be inferior to the Father. This acknowledged inferiority you are compelled, in spite of your infallible creed, to refer to his inferior state apart; and in this state why was he, and why does he claim to be, glorified by the Father; why inherit of the first Person; why not more especially of the second, with which he was united, and with which by his labours and sufferings in the flesh he had earned this heritage of glory? Indeed by the incarnation of this Person in his body, all the glory which he received must necessarily have proceeded from it, by that eternal and irrevocable union by which they became one substance. Why then should the second Person be so studiously concealed; and why on these occasions, where, especially of all the three, he ought to be the most prominently conspicuous, why no mention of him? Mention! why there is not the most distant allusion to his existence. On the contrary, by this constant recurrence to the Father by Christ and St. Paul, his existence is set aside and specially denied, by their mutual declaration, that there is no God but God the Father; (1 Cor. viii. 6., xv. 24; Eph. iv. 6.) If you would but candidly admit that God the Father must be here what you represent him elsewhere, the first Person of the Trinity, the question could admit of no farther discussion; but as you cannot make this admission without a complete renunciation of your doctrine, you have no other resource than to deny your own definition, and boldly to assert that

God the Father, in such passages, comprehends the whole Trinity. But by this confusion of Persons, which you yourselves expressly declare against, you would but avoid one difficulty by falling into others equally great. In the first place, in all these verses the phrase is not God, but God *the Father*, which, without referring to any particular doctrine, necessarily denotes a single person, a special designation, a definite individuality. Admitting, therefore, that the sacred writers acknowledged the union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as one sole God, it was impossible for them to have identified this one God with the first Person alone of the Godhead, for he could not be one of the three, and at the same time the union of all the three; he could not be at once the first Person of the Trinity, and the whole Trinity together. Your own definition, therefore, renders it impossible that the phrase, God the Father, can mean the Trinity. If the persons, as you say, are not to be confounded; if they have an existence of themselves, then God the Father cannot be the Son, nor the Holy Ghost; for, if so, he would be the *entire* God; he would be all in all; and the Son and the Spirit only different modes of his existence: and this is precisely the doctrine of Christ and his Apostle; for the former says, that it was the Father who was in him that spoke and acted. What you, therefore, call the second Person, was an emanation from the Father to the Son for an especial purpose. The Son and the Father are therefore the same. *He that seeth me, seeth the Father*. St. Paul says the same thing of himself; that he was now in Christ's stead; that the same word was continued to him; that God was in him as in Christ: in other places he says, that it was the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit; (1 Cor. xii. 3., 2 Cor. v. 20.) Thus making the Father and the Spirit one; that the Holy Ghost was the Spirit of the Father operating in him. This identity of the Son and the

Spirit with the Father ; this acknowledgment that they were both but demonstrations of His power, is therefore the language of Christ and his Apostles. But they never would have held this language, if they had been conscious all the time that there resided in Christ this second Person, a very God, equal to the Father. Christ never could have spoken of his supremacy, or have said that the Father was *alone* in him, nor could his disciples have asserted that God the Father was alone. He might, according to you, have said that God was alone; but to nominate specially the Father, and to say that beside Him there is no other, would alone be decisive with me that there is no other.

If your doctrine be orthodox, it must necessarily have been that of Christ and St. Paul. "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." If after reading this in your words, I was to reply; there is but one God, God the Father; could you reconcile this declaration with my belief in the Trinity? It would be as complete a denial as words could convey. It is therefore quite impossible that Christ or St. Paul, infallible guides of our faith, could have used this language, (see verses above quoted), which, to say the least, must be called inaccurate; but inaccuracy, under the influence of inspiration, is as impossible as that which is untrue. But with this belief it would have been untrue, for it would have been an exclusive acknowledgment of the one, and a direct rejection of the two others. On a matter of such moment, would they have used such ambiguous, nay, contradictory language? You see that I regard it myself as an incontestable proof, that they really meant, what the words convey, the sole Divinity of the Father. *But to us there is but one God, THE FATHER.....and one Lord Jesus Christ.* Again; *One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all.* I oppose this to you as an unanswerable

argument in favour of this truth ; and can you suppose that language so calculated to inspire this belief, if false, could have been dictated by inspiration ? You have thought it necessary on this occasion to employ the strictest logical definitions, the most minute exactness, the most studied precision of language, and yet you attribute to Christ and St. Paul a loose and indefinite phraseology, more calculated to lead to error than to truth ; to deceive than to instruct. If the Scriptures taught me, as they have taught you, that God the Father was the first Person only of a Trinity, and afterwards, by the same Scriptures, that besides Him there is no other God or Person, what am I to believe between two such contradictory statements ? If the first Person and the entire Trinity are described in the same terms, what confusion must such indistinctness of language create in all our notions upon this subject, hard and intricate enough of itself. It is therefore impossible that the Scriptures could apply to the whole Trinity, that which is the appropriate and specific designation of one of the Persons only. I cannot attribute this to the Author of our religion, all whose doctrines were ratified by the Divine sanction. With the knowledge of the three Persons, he never could have declared that from the Father *alone* proceeded all power, and goodness, and wisdom. Such a declaration cannot consist with such a belief ; and as I am bound to believe in his declarations, I must take them alone as the ground of my faith ; and especially so, as the opposite doctrine which you impute to him is confirmed by no one word or deed during the whole of his ministry ; his total silence throughout as to his own and the Divinity of the Spirit, is a corroboration of his direct acknowledgment, that in the Father alone was all authority centered, to which both he himself and all things were subordinate.*

* This objection may be stated in two lines. You say that your religion enjoins you to believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy

It is true, that at times St. Paul speaks of Christ in the highest terms of exaltation. He describes his power as mighty and exceeding great; in whom was all the fulness of the Godhead; who was raised above all might and dominion in this world and that which is to come, having all things under his feet; (Eph. i. 19, to the end.) But after all he is but God's vicegerent, who must render up the power committed to him when all shall have been accomplished; (1 Cor. xv. 24—28.) It is scarcely possible for any one to read with attention from the 24th to the 29th verses of the above chapter, and continue to assert the equality of Christ with the Father: it is no longer an error of the judgment, it is a prejudice which has closed his mind against truth and conviction. Here it is distinctly stated, not figuratively, but in language so clear, so strong, so comprehensive, that it may almost be looked upon as a prophetic declaration on the part of St. Paul, to guard mankind against the fatal error into which he foresaw they were about to fall; here it is stated that Christ, not in his human but in his vicegerent state, and even afterwards when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, shall remain for ever subject to Him. To assert after this the equality of Christ with the Father, is to set at naught the authority of the Apostle. It is needless to multiply quotations; you have the book before you; you will find therein numberless other passages and terms of the same nature as those to which I have called your attention. If these have served, in conjunction with the arguments with which they have been accompanied, in any degree to weaken your confidence in your former opinions, a farther perusal may produce a still farther effect; but if they have had no influence upon

Ghost. The Founder of your religion distinctly asserts, that there is no God but the Father; which is also confirmed by the sacred writers. It is for you to reconcile this palpable contradiction.

them, it would be quite useless to refer you to others of a similar kind.*

*Of these the following are very decisive :—John xvii. 5. Christ here prays to the Father as the only true God, (v. 3.) to restore to him that glory which he had with Him before the world was, and which the Father gave him ; (v. 22.) No other inference can be drawn from this, than that this glory was communicated to him by the Father, and that it depended upon His will, whether it should be restored to him ; which certainly could not be if it existed as *essentially* in one, as in the other.

(John iii. 17); “*God sent His Son into the world, that through him it might be saved.*” Now you maintain that this salvation could only come through the suffering of the second Person. *He* was therefore the messenger, for he “*came not of himself, but the Father sent him ;*” (John viii. 42.) It was not on his part a spontaneous act, but obedience to a command ; and this command and obedience must necessarily refer to his heavenly state.

In the following passages, which have already been noticed, from Eph. iv. 5—10 : “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*” From 1 Cor. viii. 6 ; “*For to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*” “*By whom*” he also says, “*He made the worlds ;*” (Heb. i. 2.) Here the Father and the Son are separately and distinctly characterized, the former as the only one God, and the latter as subordinate, as the instrument by which He made the worlds ; His appointed agent ; the chosen to execute His sovereign will. Opposed to all the above clear and decisive texts, what are all your far-fetched interpretations, your forced inferences ? Am I to prefer constructive, to direct evidence ? When I have clear and positive proof, am I to decide from the obscure and doubtful ? Are the clearest annunciations to be superseded by mere inferences from ambiguous language ? All the numberless avowals of inferiority on the part of Christ during his sojourn on earth, you refer to his humanity apart ; but when, in the above passages, I shew you the same declarations of subordination in his heavenly state, both before and after his incarnation, what do you, what *can* you, reply ? Nothing. You evade the question, because you cannot answer it. You seek by every subterfuge, and equivocation, and sophism, to explain away the evident meaning of the words, and to set in opposition to them other passages which are *supposed* to *imply* Christ’s Divinity. But could you make out these suppositions to be certainties, instead of furthering the cause of Christianity, you would do it more harm than it ever has been, or will be, in the

Of the various arguments which I have urged against your doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, if there be any of which you admit the validity, by them alone you are bound to decide the whole question, for in the word of truth there can be no contradiction. All must harmonize. If to some of my objections to your interpretation of certain parts of this word, you are unable to reply, you ought candidly to abandon it ; and the more so, when another interpretation is offered you, to which no objection applies, which reconciles all the parts of the New Testament, which is consonant with the spirit that pervades the whole, and which at the same time our reason does not repugn. But I know that all argument drawn from this latter source will have little or no weight with you ; the absurdities and incongruities it may present, will only augment the merit of your faith ; but if the

power of infidelity to inflict. If you could prove the Son's equality to be elsewhere as clearly asserted, as is his inferiority here ;—if in one page I was to read, that there is but *one God the Father*, (1 Cor. viii. 6.,) and in a second, that there was another equal to the Father, what am I to believe ? How am I to reconcile such palpable contradictions ? How discover the truth between such opposite statements ? I should have no resource, but to lay down the book in despair.

The very word *Mediator*, is alone a confutation of your Trinity, for in the sense in which both you and I take it, it is consistent neither with the equality, nor the homogeneity of the three Persons. To mediate, is either to obtain through another that which I have not the power to grant of myself ; or to persuade to an union of sentiment and a concord of action : the former is irreconcilable with equality, and the latter with identity of character.

When such objections as the above are urged, I wish you would either condescend in plain and simple language, without circumlocution or *metaphysical aid*, to reply to them ; or candidly acknowledge their validity : that you would meet all these difficulties with a fair and argumentative spirit, instead of flying off on all such occasions to your never-failing resource, mystery ; to which you are but too apt to sacrifice both truth, and reason, and common sense.

justness of my reasoning be confirmed by appealing to the Scriptures, to the very source whence you draw opposite conclusions ; if the foundation on which you build your system be withdrawn from under you ; if the very evidence to which you refer for your decision be against you, it becomes you, as honest enquirers, to reverse this decision ; to persist therein after conviction, would be a voluntary sacrifice of truth to pride or to prejudice. Now some of these arguments do appear to me so clearly established, so irresistibly confirmed both by reason and Scripture, as to offer all that certainty of truth, of which a moral proof is susceptible ; whilst the argument which you advocate does appear, with the same clearness of evidence, to be directly opposed to both. When I see such notions adopted, and I am sure conscientiously so, by you ; when I see others, far more competent than myself from their talents and acquirements to form an opinion, religiously practising and believing not only these, but all the mummeries and false doctrines of Popery, my first impression is, a painful sensation of doubt and uncertainty with respect to my own opinions. What, I exclaim, is truth ? Where is it to be found ? When are we sure that we possess it ? Farther reflection continues to dissipate these apprehensions. When I consider the circumstances under which nearly all they are placed who profess these opinions, I feel persuaded that it is not supereminence of talent, nor variety of knowledge, but above all, a freedom from prejudice, which conducts to truth ; of all enemies to its discovery, this is the most formidable ; wherever it has once thoroughly established its hold, especially religious prejudice, it is only a miraculous interposition that can make the scales to fall from the eyes. There is not a more striking proof of the truth of this remark, than that of St. Paul himself. Not all the vigour of his intellect, not all his profound knowledge

of the sacred writings, the evidence of miraculous power, nothing could enable him to see the light; his understanding had been subjected by strong and early prejudices; he had been nurtured in all the pride and bigotry of the Jew; under the influence of these prepossessions, his mind had become inaccessible to all the ordinary means of instruction; in the midst of the clearest evidence, he was blind to the truth; and though sincere and conscientious, he persecuted it with all the violence of an ignorant and intolerant zealot. With such an example before us of the influence of prejudice, we need no longer be surprised at any effect it may produce on inferior minds, nor at the absurd nature of the opinions which prevail. The world is governed by prejudice, not only in religion, but in morals, in politics, in arts, in science, in literature; prejudice arising from pride, ignorance, interest, education, established habits; from jealousies, aversions, partialities. Under such circumstances, can we expect to witness the prevalence of truth? Look at the dominant opinion of nations, of detached societies, of individuals, and see if they are not imposed upon them more by the force of circumstances, than they are the result of unbiassed reflection and conscientious conviction. All judgments, and attachments, and principles which are not the result of this are prejudices. How difficult then to divest ourselves of them, to throw off the influence of all these feelings and motives, to banish them from our minds previous to examination; an effort almost too great for human nature, for they are so associated with all the manner of our existence, as to operate upon us even unknown to ourselves. Self-knowledge is, of all others, the most difficult of attainment; it has been well called, the gift from above. On all doubtful questions, therefore, which involve our duty to God or man, let us turn our thoughts towards Him who is the Author of all

truth and knowledge, that He may direct our understandings, and incline our hearts. Independently of the aid which He may vouchsafe to sincere enquiry, the habit of addressing our thoughts to Him elevates the mind, and frees it from the influence of many a lurking prejudice, many a secret attachment, many a selfish prepossession, which prevents the free exercise of its powers. But to this end it is necessary that your addresses to Him, though expressed in terms which you believe to be the language of truth, should ever be in that spirit of humility and distrust of yourselves, which belong to you as fallible creatures, and not with that self-sufficiency, with that presumptuous confidence, which is imposed upon you by your creeds and articles, and which tends more to the confirmation of error, than to the discovery of truth, and to rivet as a prejudice what should only be the result of modest enquiry. Whatever is plainly agreeable to reason and Scripture, you may receive with the full confidence of truth; and what is as plainly opposed to them, you may with the same confidence reject. Whatever relates to our moral duties; the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; the rewarding of faith and good-works; in all that relates to these truths, which are the most essential and the most nearly concerning us, we cannot be deceived, there is no difference of opinion; but as to other doctrines of minor importance, on which differences of opinion do exist, it becomes you to speak with modesty, and not with the confidence of that infallibility which belongs to God alone, but for which you can plead only the authority of man. When such dogmas as these of the Trinity, and Incarnation, and Election, and Free-will, &c., are affirmed with all the dogmatic assurance of inspiration, it behoves you to pause, and before you consent to receive them as Gospel, to see on what such high pretensions rest. When I see the belief in such doctrines

enforced by damnatory clauses, consigning to perdition all who do not receive them, whose fault can at the most be but an error in judgment, it is quite sufficient for me to regard all such enunciations of faith, as an emanation from the father of all lies, rather than an inspiration from the God of truth. And yet it is to such sources as these that you turn to seek knowledge. Would you gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Do you look as the guide of your faith to your creeds and articles, a monstrous compilation of absurdities and contradictions, an unintelligible jargon of metaphysical subtleties and distinctions, which no man ever did or ever can understand? A creed hatched in the very hot-bed of polemical disputes, when every Christian feeling and doctrine was lost sight of, partaking of all the angry passions of man; a creed unknown to primitive faith, and to the establishment of which one half of Christendom was opposed; which owes its ascendancy to accident, and which has hitherto been maintained by the terrors of persecution on the one hand, and the allurements of temporal reward on the other. And it is on such a monstrous production of human weakness and wickedness that you found your faith. With the word of God in your hands, will you appeal to human authority? Will you take your creed from fallible men, when you can have recourse to the fountain itself of all truth?

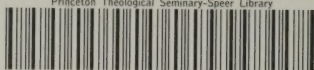
My memory is not sufficiently retentive to enable me, without a reference to documents, of which I am here altogether deprived, to trace out to you the origin and progress of this dogma of the Trinity; how by little and little it continued to gain ground, until its final ascendancy in the fourth century. Christianity had no sooner obtained a footing in the world, than it began to be corrupted by the vain comments and frivolous disputes of the different sects that had

embraced it. Its simplicity but ill accorded with the pride of human philosophy. The vanity of its professors was hurt in espousing a doctrine that was equally accessible to the learned and unlearned. The converts to this belief appear not to have abandoned their ancient prepossessions. Each sect endeavoured to find therein, or to engraft upon it, their own particular tenets. But there were none who contrived so effectually to incorporate their reveries with the Christian doctrine as the Platonists. The character of their philosophy was the best suited to the visionary and mystical speculations respecting the nature of God, of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, which occupied the attention of Christendom. They who have studied the system discovered therein the rudiments of the Trinity, and trace not only the origin, but the final incorporation of this dogma into the Christian scheme, from the influence of this sect. Its triumph over the unity of the Deity, which was the universal faith of the primitive Christians, was effected by degrees. The character of Christ went on constantly increasing in dignity and power; new attributes were successively given him, until at length his perfect equality with the Father was, I think, for the first time openly avowed at the Council of Nice. But the decision was far from being acquiesced in by Christians in general. A large, if not the larger proportion still maintained the superiority of the Father; and Athanasism and Arianism became successively the orthodox doctrine, accordingly as it happened to coincide with the faith of the reigning Emperor. Each persecuted and anathematized in their turn, as each gained the ascendancy; and perhaps no where does human nature appear in so degraded, so contemptible a point of view, as in the history of these contentions. When the spiritual power of the Church of Rome had thoroughly established itself, and the infallibility of its councils was

universally admitted, this doctrine was received as an article of faith, and enforced by the same violence with which all its errors have been supported. At the period of the Reformation, the efforts of Luther and Calvin and the other Reformers, were mainly directed against the enormous abuses of power on the part of the Church of Rome. The consequences were, that the Protestants, in their famous Confession, retained almost all the tenets of Popery, except those on which its power and influence mainly depended; and these tenets were afterwards adopted as fundamental articles by all the Protestant Establishments of Europe, and the belief in them alike enforced by penal statutes. The sour and ferocious Calvin had given an example by the burning of Servetus; and this instance of Protestant bigotry has been but too frequently imitated, even in our own country. In the present enlightened day of toleration and freedom of conscience, when man is no longer obliged to bow down to the authority of councils and worldly establishments, but can have recourse to the only source of truth, can boldly appeal to the word of God for the faith that is in him, we shall see all the errors and false doctrines which have been incorporated into our religion gradually disappear. The trash and lumber of more than a thousand years of ignorance and superstition will be swept away, and Christianity will re-appear in all its native simplicity. Of these false doctrines, the very head and front of offence, the worship of three Gods, will be the first to give way, as having the least foundation in reason or revelation. The axe is already laid to the root, and this last form under which Idolatry and Polytheism have appeared, is being finally banished from the earth. It is then, and not till then, that we shall witness the rapid dissemination of Christianity, by the removing of this great stumbling block to the conversion of nations. It

is then, and not till then, that its genuine influence will be felt, in its practical effect upon the character and conduct; for till now little else than the name of it has existed. Man's attention will be turned from vain speculations and useless discussions, to the weightier matters of the law. His faith and his practice will be at once plain, rational and intelligible;—his faith, a belief in the mission, the miracles, and the resurrection of Christ; his practice, that simple, sublime, and all comprehensive maxim—“*Do unto others what you would that they should do unto you.*” This is all in all; it is the sum and substance of the whole. It is as Christ hath said, “*the law and the prophets.*”

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